Reducing Recidivism With the Chances Program: Immigrant Juvenile Delinquents in Israel

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the Chances program, a program that was established in 2004 in order to prevent juvenile delinquency among immigrant youth in Israel. Previous research showed that immediately after the program ended, all participants stopped their delinquent behavior. The current research tested the effectiveness of the program two and a half years later and explored the risk of or immunity to recidivism among graduates of the program. A sample of 145 graduates was asked to fill out a closed questionnaire examining the effectiveness of the program through self-report questions about recidivism. The results were significant, showing that only three of the graduates (14% of the sample) continued to commit felons, while the great majority (86%) reintegrated into normative life within the community including school, employment, and army service. Fears of disappointing their tutor were found central to the discontinuation of delinquency. The graduates also attributed other elements of the Chances program to their normative behavior and reintegration into normative society. The implications of this study demonstrate that although the Chances program was designed to treat immigrant delinquent youth, its success can be relevant for treating native-born delinquent youth as well.

Keywords

Long-term effectiveness, reintegration, immigrant youth, juvenile delinquency, Chances program

The Chances program was established in Israel a few years ago by a non-profit organization for the rehabilitation and the reintegration of immigrant delinquent youth. The program treats immigrant youth using a holistic point of view that combines parents, school, and the community. It sees immigrant delinquent youth as victims of their own special problems, as individuals (identity), as children who have lost parental care and control, and as individuals who suffer from labeling, exclusion from their peer group, and difficulties at school.

In order to prevent the recidivism of delinquent immigrant youth, each participant in the Chances program is allocated a personal tutor with whom he

meets at least twice a week. The tutor, who is a student (of social studies, social work, or criminology and attended a short preparation course), acts as a big brother to the participant by caring for him and helping him to integrate into a normative lifestyle in the culture of his new country without constantly judging his behavior. In addition, all participants in the program attend a communal workshop (Edelstein 2008; 2011).

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Three central concepts—juvenile delinquency, juvenile delinquency among immigrant youth, and recidivism and prevention programs—need introducing before we can understand the need as well as the success or failure of the “Chances” program.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

There are many theories about the causes of juvenile delinquency, each attributing the behavior to different causes. For example, delinquent behavior has been seen as the result of multiple difficulties and deficiencies stemming from family dysfunction including lack of parental control (Bartollas and Schmallegger 2013), differential association with delinquent peers, social structure, and labeling (Becker 1963; Blokland and Bijleveld 2009; Matza 1964; Merton 1957; Sutherland 1947), and mental problems (Siegel and Welsh 2013; 2014). Despite the many theories, not all of them have been tested or tested properly. Even were there a high correlation between delinquency and a specific risk factor, this is still not sufficient since there is no one theory in either criminology or social science that explains a social problem in terms of delinquency. It is therefore more appropriate to use multiple theories model to explain social problems that might lead to juvenile delinquency (Edelstein 2000).

There are, nonetheless, some theories in criminology which have more capacity to explain delinquent behavior than others, for example, Hirschi's (1969) social bond theory. This theory is simple and logical in its understanding that as long as youth remain disconnected from society, they will feel anomie and thus act in non-normative ways. It proposes or directs intervention as a way of reinforcing the weak bond between the youth and society. The theory sees delinquency as stemming from four factors: a lack of attachment to significant others (parents, teachers, and peer group); a lack of commitment to normative behavior due to the stigma

of failure in school or other negative encounters with society; a lack of involvement in conventional activity due to low self-esteem, negative labeling, and exclusion; and finally, a lack of belief in the norms of society, which are experienced as unfair and impossible to comply with. As a result of these factors, a mechanism of self-defense against the formed negative feelings and experiences is set into motion. The social bond theory was tested in more than 100 studies and found to be an important tool for both explaining and intervening in juvenile delinquency behaviors (Akers and Sellers 2012; Anderson and Bonta 2010). It can, in fact, be argued that this theory can be used to explain delinquent as well as normative behavior. The four components of the social bond are relevant for explaining delinquency. Delinquent youth may develop an attachment to criminals. They can have a stake in criminality which can be based on knowledge or a reputation they do not want to lose. They may be involved in many different criminal activities together with others as drug dealing until they do not have the resources for any other activity. They may believe in gang norms just as other youth believe in normative society's norms.

The social bond theory, however, can be seen not so much as a theory but more as a reflection of a common sense that most people can be expected to have. It has much resonance in Israeli society and can be used to explain delinquency among Jewish as well as Arab youth. Among the latter, the breakdown of the traditional family structure and in particular mothers working outside the home have left many youth without any supervision. In addition, the absence of organized after-school activity causes many youth to fall into vagrancy and to look for some excitement. The social bond theory can also explain the situation of Jewish immigrants to Israel. As discussed below, immigrant youth lack an attachment to their parents as well as to other adult figures. Immigration may destroy family as well as community structure and function, as can be seen among immigrant youth from

North Africa, Ethiopia, and the former Soviet Union. This phenomenon may be evident not only in Israel but also in Europe and other immigrant countries.

Another theory used to explain juvenile delinquency is the labeling theory (Becker 1963). The labeling theory predicts that once a child or adolescent is labeled as a delinquent (no matter whether they actually committed an offence or not), they will become far more delinquent; in other words, the theory can predict the criminal outcome of labeling. On the other hand, Addad (1989) argued that the negative result of labeling is not automatic and does not take place among all labeled youth. He claimed that children who receive warm and loving care from parents who emphasize how good they are will not accept negative labeling if imposed by others. The generalization regarding the applicability of this theory is, therefore, limited, as a scientific method well to test its claims.

The labeling theory has played (i.e. it is still relevant today) a major role in Israel, mainly when applied to immigrant youth who came from a different culture than the host country. For example, immigrants from North Africa were sent to lower level schools, mainly vocational schools, because it was believed that they could not succeed in regular schools. Similar labeling occurred among Ethiopian youth, who were sent to special education programs. Both of these two groups in different time periods were labeled as primitive and dangerous. The same negative labeling was attached to youth living in poor neighborhoods in Israel's large cities. A correlation has often been identified between culture of origin and poverty in Israel and, the author believes, in other countries as well.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AMONG IMMIGRANTS

Sellin's (1938) theory on culture, conflict, and crime led the way to much documentation on the connection

between immigration and crime. This theory has been presented repeatedly over the years, mainly concerning second-generation youth, and especially in the wake of globalization (Anisef and Kilbride 2003; Freilich et al. 2002; Marshall 1997; Schwartz et al. 2015; Sellin 1938; Tonry 1997; Walsh, Fogel-Grinvald, and Schneider 2015).

The empirical literature has found that immigration, especially from patriarchal to modern cultures, has some repercussions on the immigrants themselves and on their families and communities (Edelstein 2000). Among second-generation immigrants, several points can be highlighted concerning effects that possibly contribute to anti-social behavior. First is the role reversal between parents and children, when children become translators and mediators between their parents and the new society (Edelstein 2000; 2003; 2005; Freilich et al. 2002; Marshall 1997). Similarly, difficulties arise from the major decrease in parental control due to the cultural conflict, acculturation stress, and other problems (Schwartz et al. 2015). There is also the presence of what has been called dual socialization, according to which children learn the norms of two opposing cultures (Rendon, Romero, and Amaury 2000; Wakil, Siddique, and Wakil 1981). The learning and social difficulties experienced by immigrant youth in school have been found to lead to school dropout, association with other youth in the same situation, and the learning of anti-social behaviors (Anisef and Kilbride 2003; Edelstein 2000; 2003; 2005; Freilich et al. 2002; Marshall 1997; Sellin 1938; Tonry 1997; Walsh et al. 2015). In addition, immigrant youth have been found to suffer from problems of low self-image.

Among some immigrant youth, these problems and difficulties express themselves in juvenile delinquency (Anisef and Kilbride 2003; Freilich et al. 2002; Marshall 1997; Sellin 1938; Tonry 1997; Walsh et al. 2015). Although this paper deals with immigrant youth, we should keep in mind that they are only a small percentage of all delinquent youth.

While the social bond theory focuses on delinquent behavior in general, it can also shed light on delinquency among immigrant youth who tend to have weaker attachment and commitment components (Edelstein 2000). Among immigrant youth in general and immigrant youth from patriarchal cultures in particular, the difficulties mentioned above are the same but far more intense. Immigrant youth also suffer from the ongoing effects of cultural transition that impact their identity: inter-generational conflicts (Sellin 1938), negative labeling (Al-Haj 2002) and social exclusion (Berry 1984; Muncie 1999). These effects, in turn, are expressed in higher rates of anti-social behaviors such as dropping out of school, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and even suicidal behavior (DeLa Rosa 2002; Freilich et al. 2002). As mentioned above, the labeling theory (Becker 1963) may be used to explain immigrant youth delinquency. Different skin color as well as different cultural background may cause racism, moral panic, and the exclusion of immigrant youth, thus portraying them as evil and dangerous to the absorbing society.

Israel as an immigrant country is a natural laboratory in which to examine youth behavior as stemming from immigration. According to Sellin's (1938) theory, immigration is one of the most complex changes in the life of an individual and may influence each member of the family in a different way. The most important aspect regarding immigration and absorption is the gap between the two cultures. When the cultures of the immigrant and the absorbers are similar, there will be far fewer problems; if, however, there is a large gap between the two cultures, there are likely to be serious consequences for the family structure and function and for the children in both educational and social surroundings.

In the 1950s, many immigrants arrived in Israel from North Africa, thus doubling the country's Jewish population. These immigrants suffered from many

problems during their absorption into the young country's new society previously dominated by immigrants with European backgrounds (Ashkenazim). The difference between the cultures was profound. The absorbing authorities sought to change the immigrants' culture to make it "fit" the ideal model of the Sabra (a Jew born in Israel). The absorbers demanded massive changes in the immigrants' behaviors and in their so-called "primitive" and patriarchal traditional culture (Hassin 1986). In addition, the immigrants were labeled as Jewish Arabs, a confusing moniker at a time when Israel had just concluded the War of Independence against Arab enemies. They were seen as black, uneducated, and thus potentially dangerous as oppose to the White European Ashkenazim.

Internal family relations among the immigrants changed as the parents became irrelevant but nonetheless demanded that their children follow the traditional culture, confronting many young people with a dilemma between the two cultures (Hassin 1986). The North African immigrant youth suffered from many difficulties including language and education; with no help from their parents, many of them lacked formal education and dropped out from school. They were labeled as uneducated and criminals. Their criminalization is evident in the formal criminal statistics of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (Hassin 1986). It is true that some of the dropout youth turned to criminal behavior via their association with other (non-immigrant) dropout and vagrant youth. But their labeling caused the criminal justice system to treat them with more severity than other youth, since their parents were seen as undeveloped and lacking the ability to control their children. Another type of labeling came not from the larger society but from within their own families. When immigrant children wanted to become "Israeli" and to behave like their classmates, going to parties for example, their fathers called the girls "prostitutes"; some of them subsequently adopted this label and

started acting accordingly (Shoham, Rahav, and Assad 2014).

Being labeled as criminals was only one of the problems facing these youth. Their main problem, which also pushed them into criminal behavior, was their lack of social bonds (Hirschi 1969). The culture clash created a dual socialization: at school and the larger society and at home. The youth wanted to behave like Israelis in order to be socially accepted; their parents, on the other hand, demanded that they follow traditions. This created many conflicts between the two generations, with young people feeling a loss of attachment to their parents. Their low academic achievements decreased their commitment to a stake in conformity and normative behavior. Their teachers labeled them as failures, and lacking any conventional after-school activities, they wandered the streets looking for excitement. In such a situation, they did not, and maybe could not, believe in the social norms, and the path to juvenile delinquency was wide open (according to Hirschi 1969). This process was much common in peripheral towns to which immigrants from North Africa were sent.

During the 1970s, after the Six-Day War, many immigrants from North America and West Europe arrived in Israel. The gap between these cultures and Israeli culture was small, and therefore few major problems in their absorption were noted. They moved to towns in the center of Israel (in oppose to immigrants from North Africa) and received financial assistance as new immigrants (Hassin 1986). Youth immigrants from these population groups did not suffer any labeling and received much more lenient punishments if they were caught in delinquent behavior, since their parents were educated and successful and could control them well. The financial incentives given to these immigrants—for example, cars without customs and high mortgage for 25 years—were not given to the North African immigrants and would not be given to later immigration waves of Jews from different cultures

such as the Ethiopian Jews and the Central Asian Jews from the former Soviet Union.

In 1985, Jews started to immigrate to Israel from Ethiopia because they were in danger in Ethiopia. Their absorption was almost a carbon copy of the mistakes made in the 1950s. In relation to labeling theory, Ethiopians were regarded as carriers of HIV and thus a dangerous population group, and their black skin color differentiated them from other people and they were sometimes taken for illegal immigrants from Africa. As was seen among immigrants from North Africa relating to parental control and attachment, Ethiopian parents did not understand Hebrew (much more than the North African), while their children learned it much faster (Ben-Ezer 1992). This caused a role reversal between children and parents, which destroyed or decreased the parents' ability to control and attach to their children (Amir and Horovitz 2003; Apel 2000; 2003; Edelstein 2000; 2003; 2005; Hassin 1986). These differences had a major effect on the treatment to Ethiopian youth by the criminal justice authorities. For example, while Ethiopian youth comprise 1.5% of all youth in Israel, they constitute 4% of all juvenile delinquents and, more significantly, 33% of all youth prisoners in Israel, although not the hardest criminals (Israeli Police Department 2014). This data point to harsh treatment from both the criminal justice system and the juvenile courts. One explanation given for these statistics is that Ethiopian parents are "primitive", unemployed, and suffer from alcoholism and thus cannot take care of their children (Edelstein 2003).

The theories and explanations about the causes of delinquent behavior among immigrant youth are similar to those of juvenile delinquency in general but with a greater emphasis on labeling and reduced parental control. These explanations seem to the author as to other scholars both correct and logical (Edelstein 2003). However, logic should not be a criterion in examining human behavior. The aforementioned explanations and theories are not

unique to immigration and immigrants. Children and young people are labeled for many different reasons, none relating to the fact that they are immigrants or not. The same criticism applies to the social bond theory. There are many children who lack the four dimensions of social control even without being immigrants, while there are many immigrant youth who are attached to their parents, work hard in school, take part in youth movements or other normative after-school activities, and believe in the social norms they internalize.

This criticism recalls an earlier comment that in the social sciences, there is no one theory that explains juvenile delinquency in general or delinquency among immigrant youth in particular.

JUVENILE DELINQUENT RECIDIVISM AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

It is generally assumed that there is a hard core of juvenile delinquents who are responsible for most delinquent activity (OJJDP 2011; Wolfgang, Figlio, and Sellin 1972). Indeed, findings in Israel have shown that 28% of all juvenile delinquents are responsible for 68% of all crimes (Ben-Baruch 2005). This hard core of delinquents are recidivists and threaten society's security. Their motivation and ability to change their criminal way of life is low (DeLisi 2005), and they thus may follow this path from adolescence through to adulthood (Benda, Corwyn, and Toombs 2010). These findings pave the way to the author's first hypothesis that while most delinquent youth abandon their anti-social behavior in adulthood on finding a job and/or getting married (Ben-Baruch 2005; Wolfgang et al. 1972), thus proving that intervention programs can prove successful (Braithwaite 1989; L. Zhang and S. Zhang 2004), some delinquent youth continue with delinquent recidivism regardless of intervention programs or punishments. It is clear that one of the problems with rehabilitation programs is that they do

not take into account the special needs of different youth nor the fact that each individual needs different period of time in the program (Przybylski 2008).

Recidivism or chronic delinquency may be defined as committing many (sometimes severe) delinquent acts repeatedly in spite of many encounters with the police and/or juvenile courts (Blumstein and Larson 1971; Chamberlain 1998; Lukin 1981; Yoshikawa 1994). Chronic delinquency is usually characterized by multiple kinds of delinquent behavior ("a supermarket of delinquency" [Edelstein 2005: 22]), often starting at an early age (Yoshikawa 1994). If it continues into mature adolescence, the kind of delinquency becomes increasingly stable and professional. Scholars have labelled recidivism in juvenile delinquents as "serious delinquency" (Loeber and Slot 2007) and even as a criminal career. Research on chronic, career, or professional criminals has in fact shown that criminal activity starts in the early stages of adolescence (DeLisi 2005; Edelstein 2008; Muncie 1999; NIJ 2009).

Many kinds of intervention programs were consequently developed, first in the 1960s and then again in the 1990s. Most dealt with preventing anti-social behavior; some aimed to reintegrate school dropouts, and others still looked to fully rehabilitate juvenile delinquents (Frederick 1999; Frederick and Roy 2003; Hiew and MacDonald 1986; Mulvey 2011; NCJ 1990; 2008; Tolan, Perry, and Jones 1987). Many programs were developed in order to reduce juvenile delinquency, but little thought was given to special programs for immigrant delinquent youth (Chamberlain 1998; Edelstein 2000; 2014; Freilich et al. 2002; Hiew and MacDonald 1986; Hovav, Mell, and Golan 2008; Lukin 1981; Martinez, Jr. and Lee 2000; Martinez, Jr. and Valenzuela, Jr. 2006; Mulvey 2011; NCJ 1990; 2008).

The idea of rehabilitating criminals is not new. It was developed in the nineteenth century together with the development of the medical model for human behavior (Akers and Sellers 2012). The idea was that

people who break the law do not do so intentionally but rather have some kinds of biological, psychological, or sociological defect. It was thus concluded that these people will not be cured by punishment but need treatment that will heal them (Akers and Sellers 2012).

Much money and effort were invested in rehabilitation programs in prisons until the mid-1970s when, in a paper named "What Works?" about the many prevention and rehabilitation programs, Martinson (1975) claimed that "nothing works" and dissuaded these efforts, even causing their cancellation. Harsh punishments were thus instituted instead of rehabilitation programs, which resulted in growing incidents of juvenile delinquent behavior that continued into adult life and the development of criminal careers (DeLisi 2005).

In the mid-1970s and again at the beginning of the 1990s, alternative programs were developed instead of imprisonment, especially for youth, such as probation, special homes, and other options (Akers and Sellers 2012; Shoham and Shavit 2004). Later on, in the 1990s, new approaches towards juvenile delinquency in general and immigrant youth in particular raised hopes of rehabilitating delinquent youth via more individually tailored programs (Hovav et al. 2008; NCJ 1990; 2008; NCJRS 1996; NIJ 2009). However, these rehabilitation efforts have been criticized for not being effective enough in the face of ever rising crime (Shoham and Shavit 2004). It has also been claimed that each criminal needs their own special program in accordance to their own needs and that the state forces rehabilitation on criminals who do want to change their way of life (Akers and Sellers 2012).

As for immigrant delinquent youth, some scholars have shown that they are more liable to receive harsher punishments because the police and courts see them as more dangerous, especially if they have come from a different culture or have some unique physical characteristic such as a different skin color (Edelstein 2011; Hassin 1986).

The current paper discusses the effectiveness of these programs in general and the "Chances" program in Israel in particular in attempt to demonstrate what works, what does not work, and what is promising in the prevention of recidivism among delinquent youth.

As seen earlier, much attention was given to the notion that if society finds a way to rehabilitate juvenile delinquents, there will be far less adult criminals in the future and more youth will have a chance at adulthood as normative members of society. However, reality and previous studies on the effectiveness of intervention programs have shown that the rehabilitation of delinquent youth is not so simple or successful. For example, studies conducted in the United States found that among juvenile delinquents who were imprisoned or enrolled in intervention programs, 81% of males and 45% of females reengaged in delinquent behaviors three years later (Frederick 1999). Three variables were found significant in recidivism: criminal history, young age of first conviction, and belonging to a community with a low socio-economic status (NIJ 2009; OJJDP 2011).

Other studies in the United States also confirmed the young age of first conviction as a main variable for recidivism among juvenile delinquents (Benda et al. 2010; Lattimore, Visher, and Linster 1995). More recent studies, however, have demonstrated that lack of parental control and substance abuse are the major reasons for their recidivism (Thornberry and Hall 2005). The data most relevant to the current research concern the young age of first conviction and the brevity of involvement in an intervention program (Miner 2002).

It is important to be aware in this discussion that we are dealing with children; some are no more than 13 or 14 years old. These teenagers still lack a firm and developed personality. They may feel the effects of their environmental factors: parents, peer groups, scholastic achievements, and others. Every intervention must therefore consider these factors or, at least, be conscious of their influences during the

intervening process (Armstrong 2003; Lukin 1981; OJJDP 2003).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUNISHMENT AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN THE PREVENTION OF JUVENILE RECIDIVISM

In the extensive literature on juvenile delinquent punishment and rehabilitation, most studies concerned their effectiveness for a period of only six months after the punishment or the end of the program (Hovav et al. 2008; Lattimore et al. 1995; Lukin 1981; Mulvey 2011; NCJ 1990; 2008; NCJRS 1996; OJJDP 2003; 2009; 2011; Przybylski 2008; Rivkin and Shmaia-Yadgar 2007). There are at least two reasons for this phenomenon. One is that most intervention programs are less effective over time; another is that interventions in adolescence are less effective due to the aforementioned characteristics of the adolescent period. It is, therefore, difficult to attribute any behavior to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of intervention programs (Frederick 1999; Frederick and Roy 2003). Another problem emphasized in the literature is the lack of cooperation between the different agencies and authorities, which thus also results in the adolescents' reengagement in crime (Frederick 1999; NCJ 1990; 2008). Moreover, most programs are not tailored to the unique or different personality traits of the adolescents and therefore lack efficacy (Armstrong 2003; Lukin 1981; OJJDP 2003).

Studies by Hiew and MacDonald (1986) and Tolan et al. (1987) showed that referral to intervention and prevention programs can decrease rates of juvenile delinquency, claiming that after the program, recidivism rates were only 25%. While these data are impressive, it should be noted that the effectiveness of the programs was not examined in terms of a future timeline.

A further study was carried out by the United States Department of Justice (NCJRS 1996) and

examined 12 intervention programs for juvenile delinquents in Florida and their effectiveness one year after completion. The results showed that after one year, recidivism rates were 30% among youth who had attended the programs but higher among those who had never attended an intervention program. Only one of the 12 programs showed success in recidivism prevention with only 15% of the youth reengaging in crime, but the number of delinquent youth in this program was 13, making it a relatively small test case.

Frederick and Roy (2003) explored intervention programs in day centers for juvenile delinquents over a period of five to eight months. They found no difference in recidivism between youth sent to prison and those referred to the programs. They also found that the effectiveness of the program diminished six months after its completion.

A longitudinal study of the United States Department of Justice (Mulvey 2011) reviewed rates of recidivism following imprisonment or participation in community-based intervention programs. The study sampled 1,354 juvenile delinquents aged 14 to 18 and found that a decreased rate of delinquency in both cases. Of the participants in the study, 91% reported a decrease in their delinquency three years after court processes. This study claimed that community-based programs, programs that combine studying and working (Mulvey 2011), are more successful than prison in preventing recidivism; however, this study, as in the case of others mentioned previously, does not specify the recidivism rates maintained after those three years.

The most recent US-based study examined local prevention programs (OJJDP 2011) and the effectiveness of 377 programs involving 28,750 youth. Findings showed a negative correlation between anti-social behaviors and program training (i.e., youth who graduated from these programs decreased their anti-social behavior). The most salient result was that recidivism rates dropped to 5%. However, the results

did not specify how many youth were delinquents before attending the program and only examined the recidivism rates close to the end of the program.

The review shows that while there are promising programs for preventing anti-social as well as criminal behavior, most of the evaluations are, problematically, made up to six months after the programs end. The author goes on to address this criticism below.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUNISHMENT AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN RECIDIVISM PREVENTION AMONG YOUTH IN ISRAEL

It should be noted that there is in Israel a special criminal law for youth aged 12-18 which emphasizes the care and rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents over punishment (Israeli Parliament 1971). The judge can choose one or more of eight ways to care for and rehabilitate a delinquent youth. Probation officers can ask the judge to change these directives at any time in order to find the best way to benefit the specific adolescent (paragraph 30). Nonetheless, as in other countries, there is little research in Israel on the effectiveness of intervention programs to reduce delinquency. And here too, the studies have tended to examine recidivism rates at the end of the programs or three months after (Hovav et al. 2008).

Hovav et al. (2008) found that recidivism rates after two years of 30% among delinquent youth referred to probation officers, but these rates were collected from welfare records and not tested by self-report methods. There may, therefore, be higher rates of recidivism which have gone unreported (Rivkin and Shmaia-Yadgar 2007). These two studies aside, there are no other studies in Israel about rehabilitation and recidivism in general and among immigrant youth in particular. The current research therefore brings some new and important knowledge about these issues in attempt to bridge this gap.

THE CHANCES PROGRAM FOR RECIDIVISM REDUCTION

The Chances program aims to intervene in and rehabilitate delinquent immigrant youth in Israel. This relatively new program was established in 2004 in Jerusalem by the Yedidim organization with a management committee which includes the police and the ministries of absorption and welfare. The program sees delinquent youth as having lost their bond to society due to the immigration and absorption processes which denied them basic needs such as caring and monitoring parents, progressive scholastic achievement, and integration in their peer group. Many youth may find themselves in similar situations, but the prevalence among immigrant youth is much higher, and Chances thus looks to supply these youth with caring and accepting surroundings that do not judge them for their actions.

The program provides the youth with personal tutors who are not professional social workers or psychologists but students and therefore more like older brothers (they are all male) or adult friends with whom the youth can share thoughts and feelings without fear of judgement. They allow the youth to feel safe and to feel that somebody older is caring for them, maybe for the first time in their lives (Edelstein 2008). This fact is important because immigrants tend to see the establishment as something cold and estranged. Big brothers are something else; the youth can share more secrets or private matters with them with no fear of being punished.

The program is designed to reshape the lives of immigrant juvenile delinquents by giving them the opportunity for a fresh slate, a second chance to be productive and contributing members of society. Chances is based on the assumption that with proper guidance, ongoing support, and personal attention, the lives of at-risk youth can take a different course. The program does not, however, have the privilege of choosing the youth that seem most suitable to its

practices and goals. It should be emphasized that not all the youth start the program because they want to be rehabilitated but rather because they are promised that their punishment will be less harsh or their criminal record will be closed. In other words, all the youth start the program with motivation, but each one is different.

Each year, 550 youth take part in this intensive program which is a combination of one-on-one mentorship, group work, and community service. Participants remain in the program for six to 12 months depending on their crime and their individual needs. Only youth who show high levels of motivation are selected for the program, and, upon successful completion of the program, the police recommends the judge to close their criminal record, thus giving them their second chance.

The interactions that take place during the program create the basis for the changes needed in the youth's worldview and normative setting; in other words, they are the basis for attachment, involvement, commitment, and belief. In addition to personal talks and leisure activities, there are group activities with their own rules in which everyone takes part (Edelstein 2008). These basic components of the program are indeed based on the principles of Hirschi's theory (Hirschi 1969).

In an earlier study of the Chances program (Edelstein 2008), recidivism rates were tested on the last day of the program. Results showed that only 3% of juvenile delinquents referred to the program displayed delinquent behavior during the program. Graduates reported that the caring and empathy of the personal tutors were the main components of the program that caused them to change their behavior (Edelstein 2010).

METHOD

The current study, which was conducted in 2015, examined the Chance program's long-term effectiveness in reducing recidivism, i.e., two and a

half years or more after the end of the study. The author located a sample of 145 immigrant youth graduates, aged 15-24, who agreed to fill in a closed questionnaire. The questionnaire including socio-demographic questions, questions about the graduates' actions since the end of the program, their personality traits, the program's content, and self-reports on further delinquency after the end of the program.

The first main criterion for sampling was that the graduates had finished the program at different times. The second criterion was that the graduates would be surveyed according to the length of time they spent in the program. All participants filled in a consent form to participate in this research and parental consent was given for participants under the age of 18. In addition, the Helsinki Declaration approval for this study was given by the Steering Committee which included representatives of the Israeli ministries of welfare, absorption, and education.

Regarding the origins of the graduates, one-third (38%) were born in Israel. Of the two-thirds (62%) born abroad, 10% were born in Ethiopia, 10% in Russia/Asia, and 42% in Russia/Europe¹. All the parents were born abroad. Regarding their ages at the time of this study, the median age was 16.5 with 30% aged 15-16, 38% aged 17-18, 23% aged 19-20, and 10% aged 21-24.

RESULTS

Current Environment of Course Graduates

In Table 1, we see that more than two-thirds (68%) of the graduates were still under 18 at the time of this study. At the end of the program, all of them reintegrated into different school settings (regular and special schools with vocational training). Almost half (45%) of the graduates worked part-time after school, and 20% were in active military service at the time of this research.

Table 1. Main Characteristics Regarding the Participants in the Chances Program

		N	%
Age on admission to the program	12-13	23	16
	14-15	61	42
	16-18	61	42
	Total	145	100
Delinquent acts committed prior to the program	Property	65	45
	Violence	84	58
	Drugs	25	17
	Vehicle	11	8
	Sex	3	2
	Total*	188	100
Program length**	0-6 months	27	19
	6-12 months	50	34
	More than 1 year	68	47
	Total	145	100
Time since end of program	0-6 months	60	41
	6 months-1.5 years	15	10
	More than 1.5 years	70	48

Notes: * One participant may have committed more than one type of delinquent act. ** The length of the program is determined according to the needs of the participant.

Delinquent Behavior Since the End of the Program

Only 21% of all the graduates reported committing delinquent acts between the end of the program and the beginning of this research; some committed more than one delinquent act in this period. On the other hand, 79% of all graduates did not reengage in delinquency from the end of the program for a period of two and a half years.

Time Interval Between the End of the Program and Reengagement in Delinquent Acts

One of the main claims of this study was that among those who return to criminal behavior, there is a linear development in recidivism, provided a longer time is spent between the end of the program and the beginning of the research. This is confirmed by the following results.

Table 3 shows that of all the graduates who returned to delinquency, almost one-third (32%) acted

in a short time interval, namely, within half of a year of the end of the program. Another 29% (around one-third) returned to delinquency within the 6-12-month medium time interval. Over one-third (39%) returned to delinquency after a long interval, namely a year after the end of the program. Most of the recidivism therefore occurred in the long time interval, thus showing a linear progress as the effectiveness of the program becomes weaker over time.

Return to Criminal Behavior

In order to further understand recidivism among graduates of the program, the author looked for the variables traditionally connected to juvenile delinquency and examined whether these or maybe different variables were responsible for this behavior. The results provided only a partial explanation. The four main reasons for recidivism were found to be: differential association with other delinquents (50%);

Table 2. Delinquent Acts in the Two and a Half Years Since the End of the Program

Type of delinquency	Never		At least once		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Property	135	93.1	10	6.9	145	100.0
Violence	129	89.0	16	11.0	145	100.0
Sex	145	100.0	0	.0	145	100.0
Drug trade	145	100.0	0	.0	145	100.0
Drug abuse	132	91.0	13	9.0	145	100.0

Table 3. Delinquency After the End of the Program in Time Intervals (N = 31)

Time after program end	N	%
Immediate	4	12.9
3-6 months (short)	6	19.3
6-12 months (medium)	9	29.0
1-2.5 years (long)	10	38.8

Table 4. Main Factors That Might Have Prevented Recidivism

Reason	%
Romantic relationship	56.7
Further contacts with the tutor after end of program	40.0
Steady job	37.9
Continuation of the program's group activity	36.6
Significant relationship with parents	20.0

lack of supportive settings (26.6%); lack of a positive connection with parents (10%); and dropping out of school (10%).

The author asked the graduates who had returned to delinquent behavior what might have prevented their recidivism. Their answers can be seen in Table 4.

Similarly, the author asked those who had not returned to delinquency to specify their main reasons for not doing so (see Table 5).

As can be seen in Table 5, the main reasons for normative behaviors given by graduates of the program included feelings of self-confidence, capability, and success. More "traditional" means of deterrence, such as punishment or labeling, seemed less influential. The fear of disappointing others, mainly the personal tutors in the program, was also evident, which showed an element of attachment.

Another set of questions intended to review the effectiveness of the program and its components in the prevention of recidivism can be seen in Table 6. Most of the graduates (78%)—those who had not committed any crime since the end of the program—reported that the program's components caused them to refrain from committing further delinquent acts.

Age on Referral to the Program and Time Spent in the Program

These two variables are crucial to the rehabilitation process. The sooner delinquent youth are referred to an intervention program, the better their chances to change their delinquent behavior and avoid negative labeling (Becker 1963). The duration of the program is not fixed but must match the needs of the individual.

Table 5. Main Reasons for not Returning to Delinquent Behavior

Reason*	N	%
Self-capability	89	83.0
Self-confidence	86	80.0
Experiencing success	71	66.0
Shame	41	38.0
Fear of disappointing self	66	62.0
Fear of disappointing others	74	69.0
Fear of punishment	38	36.0

Note: * More than one reason could be given.

Table 6. Contribution of the Program to the Prevention of Recidivism

Type of contribution	N	%
The program gave me tools that caused me not to want to engage in delinquency any more	101	89
The program gave me tools that taught me how to confront crises without turning to delinquency as a solution	88	77
The program taught me values and norms that made me understand that delinquency is a defective way of life	96	84
I was afraid of disappointing my personal tutor	71	62

Table 7. Delinquent Behavior After End of the Program in Time Duration

Time from end of program	General sample (n = 145)		Within recidivist group (n = 31)	
0-6 months	5	3.4%	5	16.1%
6 months-1.5 years	6	4.1%	6	19.3%
More than 1.5 years	20	13.5%	20	64.6%
Total	31	21.0%	31	100%

Note: $P < .01$.

Table 8. Spearman Test: Connection Between Time From the End of the Program and Delinquent Acts

Time from end of program	Delinquent acts after end of program		
.224**	1.000	Correlation coefficient	Delinquent acts after end of program
.007	.	Sig. (2-tailed)	
145	145	N	
1.000	.224**	Correlation coefficient	Time from end of program
.	.007	Sig. (2-tailed)	
145	145	N	

Note: ** $p < .01$.

There is a significant negative correlation between the age of referral to the program and recidivism but in an unexpected way: those who were referred to the program at younger ages committed more delinquent

behaviors after the end of the program ($p < .05$). There were no significant correlations between the lengths of time spent in the program and subsequent recidivism.

Time Duration Between Program End and Recidivism

One of the most important variables in the effectiveness of intervention programs is the duration of time that passes between the end of the program (“immunity”) and further delinquency (“disease”) (see Tables 7 and 8). The results show significant positive correlations between these two variables: the longer the time interval from the end of the program, the higher the chances of recidivism.

DISCUSSION

One of the main challenges in dealing with immigrant juvenile delinquency in particular is to intervene as soon as possible in order to prevent further delinquency, before the youth are negatively labeled by society, their peer group, their families, etc. (Becker 1963). Intervention programs should, in addition, start at the first opportunity in order to avoid further differential association with other delinquent youth (Sutherland 1947).

The results (see Table 2) have shown the impressive success of the Chances program in comparison with earlier programs in both the United States and Israel (Hovav et al. 2008; Lukin 1981; NCJ 1990; 2008; NCJRS 1996). Only 21% of the graduates of the Chances program return to recidivism, but even they still integrate in some normative way to society by studying, working, or doing their army service.

What Works and Why

As mentioned earlier, the first reason for success is the age of the immigrant delinquent youth, both their age on entering the program and their age today. Most delinquent youth start their delinquent behavior when they are still young (what Sampson and Laub [2005a] called “early blooming” in anti-social behavior). The immediate referral of these youth prevents them from committing further delinquent acts, cuts off their

social connection with other delinquents, and frees them of that label. Today, two-thirds (68%) of the graduates who participated in this study are under 18. At this age, it is easier to change behavior because their personalities are still not rigidly formed. It is interesting to note that the results showed no differences between those who stayed in the program for shorter or longer periods. It seems that the length of time is less important than having ones’ needs met, needs which may be attributed to such aspects as the individual’s personality and their age at referral.

The second reason for success is that the program gives delinquent youth a substitute for their boredom, loitering, and drifting into delinquency as school dropouts. This, in turn, reinforces the component of commitment and involvement in normative settings (Hirschi 1969). It should be recalled that most of these youth (81%) stayed in the program for six months or more, and almost half stayed in the program for over a year. That is not to say that the length of involvement in the program is important per se but rather to emphasize the fact that being in a normative setting may create commitment and encourage involvement. Although there is no significant correlation between this variable and recidivism or normative behavior, enrolment in the program for relatively longer periods of their adolescence may enhance the youth’s attachment to their tutors and further commit them to normative behavior.

The third reason for not reengaging in delinquent behavior may be attributed to personality traits created or strengthened during the program. As can be seen in Table 5, characteristics such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, and success all characterized the normative graduate group. In addition, graduates who scored high in these traits reported them as responsible for not returning to delinquency alongside the fear of disappointing their tutors. On the other hand, traits such as fear of punishment did not play a significant role in deterrence from further delinquent behavior. Positive experiences can thus be seen as far

more important than the fear of negative ones in changing delinquent behavior, which is at the very core of the rehabilitation process.

Despite referring to the individual personality traits, there is no doubt that the program itself plays a major role in caring for and enabling the success of these youth who have previously experienced negative experiences, failures, and low self-worth. As shown in Table 6, four specific contributions of the program may explain further normative behaviors. It should first be emphasized, however, that although not all the youth who gave these components high scores acted normatively, it may still affect their recidivism by decreasing the rate and the kind of delinquent acts in which they engaged. These main contributions are concerned with “stakes in conformity” (Nye 1958; Reiss, Jr. 1951; Toby 1957) or the commitment component in Hirschi’s (1969) theory, in other words, as long as both youth and adults commit themselves to the norms of society (at school, work, etc.) and achieve normative positions and status, they will have more to lose if they will break the law or commit deviant acts. “Stakes in conformity” therefore act as a kind of block against delinquent behavior. More than 80% of the graduates (mainly those who did not return to delinquent behavior) reported that the program gave them tools, values, and norms which helped them to refrain from further delinquency. The second highest component in the program (77%) was that it supplied participants with the tools to confront and deal with crises and troubles without returning to delinquency. The last component in the table is interesting. Two-thirds (62%) of the graduates reported that they did not return to delinquency because they were afraid to disappointed their tutor. In other words, the component of attachment was also high in preventing recidivism.

What Doesn’t Work

Although the results show the great success of the program, it is important to note that the rate of

recidivism among all graduates still stands at 21% and that these graduates may go on to develop a criminal career in adulthood. It was difficult to point to specific factors that caused these youth to continue with their delinquent behavior, particularly because of the heterogeneity of this small group which comprised 31 youth of different ages, backgrounds, and ethnicities.

Half of these graduates (50%) reported having delinquent friends, one-quarter (26.6%) reported lacking supportive settings after the program ended, and one-tenth (10%) reported an absence of positive relationships with their parents. Moreover, these youth all started their delinquency at early ages. As noted earlier, criminology literature has found a correlation between the length of criminal career and the number of delinquent acts and the age at first offense (Blumstein, Cohen, and Farrington 1988; DeLisi 2005; Farrington 1982; Hirschi and Gottfredson 1983). The current study reconfirms this correlation; the program’s ability to “immunize” these youth is low, since its introduction came after lengthy activity of the “disease”.

There are two other explanations for the connection between age at first offense and hard core recidivistic delinquents. First is that in Israel, delinquent youth under the age of 12 lack criminal responsibility and welfare authorities handle their care; second (and related) is that a minor might commit many delinquent acts over years without arrest. These youth may have already committed themselves to a delinquent way of life. While they “serve” their time in the program to lighten their punishment, they then return to their delinquent way of life but now take greater care to avoid the police. In other words, there is a hard core of delinquent youth who develop an attachment to delinquent figures, are not committed to normative behaviors, and lack a supportive normative setting, and they thus pursue action, excitement, and the thrill that come with the delinquent lifestyle.

For these youth, even if it does not succeed in rehabilitating them, during their time in the program,

they have somebody caring for them, someone who is really there for them. After the program ends, they may still feel its positive effects for some time, but as long as they return to their old connections, the effectiveness of the program decreases and negative factors take its place.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that the Chances program is very successful in preventing further delinquent acts among 79% of its participants after two and a half years. However, much uncertainty and unanswered questions still remain. First of all, we do not know for sure how many participants answered the questionnaire truthfully. The reasons for giving false answers are varied. It is possible that participants with better relationships with their tutors will look to please them by giving more positive answers about the tutors and/or the program. It is, similarly, possible that participants from specific origins tend to be more grateful than other participants and will therefore look to give more positive answers. It should also be remembered that we are dealing here with a method of self-report, a method that is, by its nature, open to problems of validity due to the lack of other sources to verify these reports. This research also lacks a control group, a limitation which weakens the validity of the results (Sherman et al. 1997; Weiss 1997).

One of the most important criticisms about the efficiency use of prevention or intervention programs on juvenile delinquents is that most of the youth will grow out of their delinquency without any help. In other words, the author assumes there are likely to be factors outside the program that influence the participants and not the program itself. They may, for example, find love or a steady job and stop their criminal behavior in order not to lose something positive in their life (Sherman et al. 1997; Weiss 1997). A theory that explains this line of thinking is Agnew's (1992) strain theory. This theory expresses

strain as an important cause to the juvenile delinquency. Among other causes, it claims disappearance of positive stimulus such as a family's member death, parents' divorce, or parting from a girl friend. On the other hand, falling in love may cause the opposite outcome, i.e. normative behavior.

However, the Chances program addresses some important problems among immigrant youth. It does not label them as the society does and sees them as individuals who equal to their native-born counterparts. Most significantly, the tutors in the program really care for these youth and try hard to reintegrate them into normative society in order to give them another chance to succeed in their lives.

More research is needed in order to examine the Chances program. Future studies should test the efficacy of the program on different groups: immigrants versus native-born youth or immigrants from Ethiopia versus immigrants from the former Soviet Union. There will be a need to differentiate between habitual offenders with criminal records and offenders with just one or two offenses. The use of a different method rather than self-reporting may guarantee a more objective evaluation.

Note

1. By Russia/Asia, the author is referring to countries in the Central Asia and Caucasus region such as Uzbekistan, Kavkaz, Turkmenistan. By Russia/Europe, the author is referring to countries such as Russia, Lita, Belarus, Latvia, and Moldova.

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