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STUDY:
Average Lengths of
Stay in Training Schools
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A STUDY OF FACTORS RELATED TO AVERAGE LENGTHS
OF STAY IN TRAINING SCHOOLS

RESEARCH MONOGRAPH 601

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ACQUISITIONS

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Highlights

The major emphasis of this study is a descriptive analysis of a number of recent furloughs from Training Schools. Of principal interest is a consideration of average length of stay as a function of a number of different variables: sex, race, urban/non-urban county, probation prior to commitment, offense types and commitment types. The consideration of average length of stay as a major variable is based on the Division's continuing interest in reducing a child's institutionalization period to the most effective minimum. It is hoped that the periodic follow-up of this analysis will both verify the following results and detect changes in these variables over time. The total sample population of this study is composed of 183 first and second commitments selected from the total population of all children furloughed from Training Schools during the period August, 1973 to February, 1974. The sample selected is a stratified random sample which is structured to provide an adequate representation of males and females and first and second commitments.

When the average length of stay was considered the following significant results were found:

1. Males are committed for a significantly longer period of time than are females.
2. The average length of stay in Training Schools is significantly longer for black youngsters than for whites.
3. First commitment youngsters stay a significantly longer period of time than do second commitment youngsters.
4. Within the Training Schools there is no correlation between severity or type of offense and the average length of stay in the institutions.

When different offense type distributions were considered the following resulted:

1. The majority of felonies are committed by males, while the vast majority of CINS violations are committed by females.
2. Sixty-one percent of the felony commitments in this study are black compared to thirty-nine percent for white commitments.
3. Sixty-four percent of all CINS commitments are white compared to thirty-six percent for black commitments.
4. First commitment children who are on probation prior to commitment tend to be committed for less serious offenses.

Description of Sample Population

The following study is mainly a descriptive analysis of a large number of recent Training School furloughs. Due to the sampling procedure employed the breakdown of the total sample with respect to sex and commitment number is not completely representative of the Training School population. While the sample population was structured to provide an adequate number of males and females, and first and second commitments, the populations which make up these subgroups or stratifications are randomly selected and should prove representative of these groups within the total Training School population. The information for this study was collected from case files. The principal variable under consideration is average length of stay in the Training Schools and it will be considered as a function of a number of other variables. This study is also designed to provide an up-to-date picture of the characteristics of recent Training School furloughs.

The total sample population is comprised of 183 first and second commitment youngsters who were furloughed from Training Schools during the period August, 1973 to February, 1974. The sample population was randomly selected from the total population of all children furloughed during this period. Of the total sample, 128 children were original commitments with 55 being classified as

second commitments. The second commitments were almost evenly divided between aftercare revocations (27) and recommitments (28).

With respect to the principal variables under consideration, the distribution for the total sample is as follows:

1. <u>Sex</u> :***	Male	54.1%
	Female	45.9%
2. <u>Race</u> :	White	51.9%
	Black	58.1%
3. <u>Mean Age</u> :*****	14.65 years	
4. Urban	52.5%	
Non-Urban	47.5%	
5. <u>Probation Prior to Commitment (1st Com.)</u>		
Yes	55%	
No	45%	
6. <u>Type of Offense</u> :****		
Felony	37.7%	
Misdemeanor	16.4%	
*CINS	45.9%	
Crimes Against Persons	14.2%	
Crimes Against Property	33.9%	
**Victimless Crimes	5.5%	
Others	46.4%	
7. <u>Average Length of Stay</u> :	213 days	

Ranging from 60-596 days; only 6% stay 365 days or more

* CINS is defined as Child in Need of Supervision and is made up of violations such as truancy, ungovernable behavior and running away.

** Victimless Crimes are such crimes as prostitution, drug usage and alcohol violations.

*** The ratio between males and females is not representative of the total training school population due to the need to sample an adequate number of females for statistical analysis.

**** The disproportionate number of females tends to skew this distribution causing an over representation of CINS violations.

***** The mean age is slightly skewed toward the younger age groups due to the disproportionate number of females represented in this sample.

The major emphasis of this study is a consideration of average length of stay in Training Schools as a function of a number of variables: sex, race, nature of committing county (urban*/non-urban), probation prior to commitment, offense types, and commitment types. Each of these variables will be discussed in turn. In addition to length of stay, other important variables will be introduced as they are deemed relevant.

Sex: When the average length of stay for the total sample population is considered by sex the following results are achieved: males, 227 days; females, 197 days. This difference is significant** at the .02 level which indicates that there is a meaningful distinction between the average length of stay for males and females, with the latter spending 30 days less time in residence. Given that the vast majority of female commitments are for CINS violations, even a period of 197 days seems inordinately long. In fact, the difference between the two means should be larger. A further breakdown of this variable is presented in Table I below. Length of stay figures are given in days.

TABLE I Length of Stay by Sex by Offense Type

	<u>Felony</u>	<u>Misdemeanors</u>	<u>CINS</u>
Males	234	206	227
Females	188	178	204

* Counties with populations of 250,000 or more were considered urban; all others were classified non-urban. This criterion placed 7 counties as urban: Broward, Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Orange, Palm Beach and Pinellas.

** Statistical significance indicates that there exists a high probability that the difference between the two means is not a random occurrence.

The information in Table I strongly reinforces the conclusion presented earlier. In each of the three offense categories males averaged longer lengths of stay, indicating that in comparing similar offense categories males have a longer average length of stay than females. In considering how other variables were related in the sample population, it was found that the average age of the two groups was remarkably similar with males having an average of 14.87 years (ranging from 11 to 20) and females having an average of 14.39 years (ranging from 12 to 17).

With regard to number of commitments, the sample contained 70 first commitment males and 29 second commitment males; among females there were 58 first commitments and 26 second commitment girls. Thus, the proportion of recommitments was fairly similar for males and females. The relationship between sex and type of offense, using two different ways of classifying the committing offense, is demonstrated in Table II.

TABLE II Sex by Type of Offense

A.	<u>Felony</u>	<u>Misdemeanors</u>	<u>CINS</u>	
Males	53.5%	21.2%	25.3%	100% (N=99)
Females	19.0%	10.7%	70.2%	100% (N=84)
	<u>Crimes Against Persons</u>	<u>Crimes Against Property</u>	<u>Victimless Crimes</u>	<u>Others (principally CINS)</u>
Males	17.2%	46.5%	9.1%	27.3%
Females	10.7%	19.0%	1.2%	69.0%

The above table amply illustrates the striking differences between the type of offenses for which males and females are committed to training schools. The majority of male commitments are for felony violations (53.5%) while the vast majority of female commitments are

for CINS violations (70.2%). With respect to the second offense classification, the largest category for male offenders is crimes against property, while females again are predominately CINS violators.

Race: As was stated above, the sample is fairly evenly divided between white and black children with 51.9% being white and 48.1% being black. The average length of stay in Training Schools for whites is 202 days while the average length of stay for blacks is a longer 225 days. A number of variables were reviewed in an attempt to explain this significant difference. A more in-depth analysis of average length of stay as associated with race is presented in Table IIIA and IIIB.

TABLE IIIA Length of Stay by Race by Offense Type

	<u>Felony</u>	<u>Misdemeanor</u>	<u>CINS</u>
White	202	199	204
Black	237	197	223

TABLE IIIB Length of Stay by Race by Offense Type by Sex

	<u>Felony</u>	<u>Misdemeanors</u>	<u>CINS</u>	<u>Average</u>
Males:				
White	217	198	211	211
Black	245	215	245	239
Females:				
White	149	202	201	195
Black	211	166	208	202

As Table IIIA indicates, the difference between average lengths of stay for black and white youngsters holds true, with the exception of the misdemeanor category, when this variable is considered by offense type. Table IIIB controls for sex and demonstrates that the difference noted between black and white youngsters is for the most part a function of the difference in average length of stay between white males and black males.

Comparing average age, it was found that the two racial groups are similar: whites average 14.67 years and blacks, 14.62 years. There was also no significant difference in the distribution of first and second commitments by race. The sample of whites was composed of 67.4% first commitments and 32.6% second commitments while the black sample contained 65% first and 35% second commitment youngsters. Comparisons of the two samples in terms of committing offense are made in Table IV.

TABLE IV Race by Type of Offense

A.	<u>Felony</u>	<u>Misdemeanors</u>	<u>CINS</u>		
White	28.4%	14.7%	56.8%	100%	(N=95)
Black	47.7%	18.2%	34.1%	100%	(N=88)
	<u>Crimes Against Persons</u>	<u>Crimes Against Property</u>	<u>Victim- less Crimes</u>	<u>Others (princi- pally CINS)</u>	
White	10.5%	27.4%	6.3%	55.8%	100% (N=95)
Black	18.2%	40.9%	4.5%	36.4%	100% (N=88)

It should be noted that there is a striking difference in the types of offenses for which blacks and whites are committed. A majority of whites are being committed for CINS violations (56.8%), while the largest percentage of blacks are being committed for felonies (47.7%). Considering the second classification scheme, the percentage of blacks committed for violations against persons and property (59.1%) is much higher than that of whites for corresponding offenses (37.9%). The nature of the crime leading to commitment may partially explain the differential in length of stay between whites and blacks. The differences in committing offense for black and white youngsters may to some extent be a function of variation within the community of what constitutes a delinquent act. It is also possible that delinquency is

perceived differently by such institutions as schools and police depending on the race of the child involved.

Urban/Non-Urban: For the purposes of this analysis the county from which each child was committed was dichotomously defined as being urban or non-urban. Those seven counties which contain a total population of 250,000 or more were labeled urban: Broward, Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Orange, Palm Beach and Pinellas. All other counties are considered non-urban. Based on this breakdown, the sample population is comprised of 52% urban and 48% non-urban youths. In reviewing average length of stay in terms of this variable, only a slight difference is evident between the two sub-samples. The average length of stay for urban children is 221 days, versus 204 days for non-urban children. The difference between these means is not statistically significant. There is also little distinction between the two groups in terms of the percentage who were on probation prior to commitment (50.7% of the urban children, 49.3% of the non-urban), or the percentage of first and second commitments within each group:
 Urban -- 75.0% 1st commitments, 25.0% 2nd commitments
 Non-Urban -- 65.5% 1st commitments, 34.5% 2nd commitments

The committing offenses for the two sub-samples were distributed as shown in Table V.

TABLE V Commitment County by Type of Offense

	<u>Felony</u>	<u>Misdemeanor</u>	<u>CINS</u>	
Urban	43.8%	13.5%	42.7%	100% (N=96)
Non-Urban	31.0%	19.6%	49.4%	100% (N=77)

An interesting facet of this distribution lies in the larger number of felonies committed by children in the more urban counties.

If it is assumed that urban counties possess a greater abundance of those community services designed to help delinquent youth, then it would seem appropriate that this fact would be an integral part of the Training School furlough decision concerning when a child should be sent back to his home community. However, since there is no statistically significant difference between the average length of stay for urban and non-urban children (in fact, urban children stay longer), it would seem that this factor is not an important variable in the release decision.

Probation Prior to Commitment (1st Commitment):

Of the total sample population, 71 children (55.0%) were on probation prior to being committed; the remaining (57) children were not on probation.

Relating prior probation to the principal study variable, average length of stay, no significant difference was found between the two groups; children who were on probation prior to commitment stayed an average of 224 days as opposed to 215 days for children with no probation experience.

A look at the breakdown by sex for the children who were on probation prior to commitment demonstrates a fairly even distribution with the sample being comprised of 53.5% male and 46.5% female. The racial breakdown demonstrates much the same breakdown with a sample of 52.1% white and 47.9% black.

Table VI shows how types of offense were distributed within the probation/non-probation categories.

TABLE VI Probation Prior to Commitment by Type of Offense (1st Commitments)

A.	<u>Felony</u>	<u>Misdemeanors</u>	<u>CINS</u>		
Yes	32.4%	21.1%	46.5%	100%	(N=71)
No	45.6%	14.0%	40.4%	100%	(N=57)
B.	<u>Crimes Against Persons</u>	<u>Crimes Against Property</u>	<u>Victimless Crimes</u>	<u>Others (CINS)</u>	
Yes	8.5%	36.6%	8.5%	46.5%	100% (N=71)
No	22.8%	31.6%	0.0%	45.6%	100% (N=57)

It is interesting to note that children who are on probation prior to commitment are committed for less serious offenses than children who lack a previous probation experience. From one perspective, it could be inferred that probation acts as a facilitating factor in the child coming before the court on a CINS offense. For example, these children commit fewer felonies (32.4% vs. 45.6%) and fewer crimes against persons (8.5% vs. 22.8%). However, previous probation experience seems to have little, if any, effect on the amount of time a child spends in Training Schools.

First Commitment/Second Commitment

As noted earlier, the total sample population is divided into 128 first commitments (69.9%) and 55 second commitments (30.1%). First commitments are divided into 70 males (54.3%) and 58 females (45.7%) with second commitments following much the same pattern: 29 males (53.7%) vs. 25 females (46.3%). With respect to race there was a slight distinction between the two samples: first commitments were 49.6% white and 50.4% black, while second commitments were 57.4% white and 42.6% black. The median age for first commitments was 14.42 years while second commitments were, logically, older, at 15.19 years.

Comparison of the average lengths of stay for first and second commitments reveals that first commitment children stay an average of 220 days while second commitment children have a shorter average stay of 196 days. The 24 day difference between first and second commitments is significant at the .10 level. The fact that second commitments are significantly shorter than first commitments was unexpected and calls for comment. One possible explanation lies in the fact that second commitment youngsters have already been through the Training School experience and in a sense "know the ropes," thus facilitating their rapid movement through the system. The question of whether second commitments should be shorter or longer than first commitments is one that merits further investigation.

The offense distributions within the first and second commitment groups are remarkably similar, indicating that there is no discernable distinction between the offenses for which children are committed for their first or second time. It should be noted that the preponderance of commitments (1st or 2nd) are for CINS violations; thus 46% of the children in this sample are committed principally for ungovernable behavior and running away. This percentage is inordinately high and is attributable to the sample being structured by sex.

With respect to the urbanization variable, it was found that first commitments were 55.8% urban compared with only 44.4% for second commitments. Still, this means that almost half of the second commitments and over half of the first commitments in this sample come from Florida's seven most urban counties. However, it should be noted that in 1972 these counties contained approximately 60% of Florida's total population.

Offense Type

An analysis of the distribution of offense types by our control variables reveals some interesting results.

TABLE VII Sex by Type of Offense

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	
Felony	78.6%	21.4%	100%
Misdemeanor	73.3%	26.7%	100%
CINS	15.9%	84.1%	100%
Persons	65.4%	34.6%	100%
Property	74.2%	25.8%	100%
Victimless*	90.0%	10.0%	100%
Others (CINS)**	31.8%	68.2%	100%

* Victimless Crimes are such crimes as prostitution, drug usage and alcohol violations.

** CINS is defined as Child in Need of Supervision and is made up of violations such as truancy, ungovernable behavior and running away.

TABLE VIII Race by Type of Offense

	<u>Black</u>	<u>White</u>	
Felony	59.5%	40.5%	100%
Misdemeanor	50.0%	50.0%	100%
CINS	33.3%	66.7%	100%
Persons	61.5%	38.5%	100%
Property	58.1%	41.9%	100%
Victimless	40.0%	60.0%	100%
Others (CINS)	37.6%	62.4%	100%

With respect to sex, the above information argues that felonies (78.6%), misdemeanors (73.3%), and crimes against persons (64.5%) and property (74.2%) are predominately male phenomena; while CINS violations are principally female (84.1%). The racial distribution for the above offense categories also merits notice. There are

important distinctions between black and white youngsters in terms of the offenses for which they were committed: over half (59.5%) of felony commitments were black, while two-thirds (66.7%) of all CINS violation commitments were white. Much the same type of relationship exists in the second offense classification, with the majority of commitments for crimes against persons (61.5%) and property (58.1%) being black. The racial distribution is reversed in the direction of more white commitments when less serious offenses are considered.

A review of the age distribution by offense type reveals the expected pattern in which the more serious offenses are being committed by what are on the average slightly older children.

Length of stay data for the various offense categories is as follows:

TABLE IX

<u>Offense Category</u>	<u>Average Length of Stay (days)</u>
Felony	218
Misdemeanor	212
CINS	208
Persons	219
Property	206
Victimless	262
Others (CINS)	210

While there is a slight tendency for felony commitments to have a longer average length of stay, this small difference is not statistically significant. It should be noted that commitments resulting from victimless crimes have an inordinately lengthy period of institutionalization (262 days). Although this sample lacks sufficient cases for the difference to be statistically significant, it does seem

worthy of further inquiry. In short, the above indicates that within the Training Schools there is no correlation between severity or type of offense and average length of stay in the institutions.

Conclusion

The value of the preceding descriptive analysis lies in the comparison of this information with the type of qualitative data which results from such studies as the analysis of Training School success rates*. Some of the main policy implications of this type of comparison are the following:

1. With first commitment males the Training Schools had a relatively high success rate of 60% for those youngsters who stayed six months or less. Yet the average length of stay for this group was 7.4 months, indicating the possibility that higher success rate for this group might, in part, be a product of a decreasing average length of stay.

2. Training Schools achieved a very low success rate with children from non-urban counties (28.6% success). However, these children comprise 44% of the total Training School population.

3. With second commitment males the Training Schools achieved their highest success rate (57%) with those youngsters who were institutionalized for a period of from 4 to 6 months. The average length of stay for this population sub-group was 6.5 months. Again, the need for a decreasing average length of stay within this group is indicated.

* The information for the following analysis was extracted from the recently completed comparative analysis of Group Treatment and Training School success rates.

4. With respect to females in the Training School population a very high success rate (86%) was achieved for females who were institutionalized for 4 months or less. The average length of stay for this group was 6.6 months. The total number of successful Training School females might significantly be increased by reducing the average length of stay.

5. The success rate in Training Schools for youngsters who were 14 years old or younger was an extremely low 10%. This group comprises approximately 40% of the total Training School population. This would seem to indicate that another program alternative (i.e., Family Group Homes, Intensive Counseling) should be employed for this group.