



Collaborative Resolution Services, Inc.

Phone: 302-222-1996

Email: info@TeamCRS.org Website: www.TeamCRS.org

Excerpts from

“What Works in Corrections; Reducing the Criminal Activities of Offenders and Delinquents”

A meta-analysis of thousands of studies by Doris Layton MacKenzie

Pages 333-339

What doesn't work:

- Life skills education
- Correctional industries
- Multi-component work programs
- Boot camps for adults and juveniles
- Intensive supervision

No single explanation seems adequate to explain why these programs were not found to be effective in reducing recidivism. Some possible reasons for these findings may be that the programs:

1. have poor or no theoretical basis
2. are poorly implemented
3. focus on punishment, deterrence, or control instead of providing human service or rehabilitation
4. emphasize the formation of ties or bonds without first changing the individual's thought process

None of the interventions focusing on punishment, deterrence, or control were found to reduce recidivism.

What does work:

- Academic education
- Vocation education
- MRT [Moral Reconciliation Therapy]
- R & R [Reasoning & Rehabilitation]
- Cognitive restructuring
- Drug treatment in the community
- Incarceration-based drug treatment

Almost all of the effective programs focused on individual-level change. In contrast, the ineffective programs frequently focused on developing opportunities. For example, the cognitive skills programs emphasized individual-level changes in thinking, reasoning, empathy, and problem solving. In contrast, life skills and work programs, examples of ineffective programs, focus on giving the offenders opportunities in the community. Based on these observations, I propose that effective programs must focus on changing the individual. This change is required before the person will be able to take advantage of opportunities in the environment.

Transformational Trainings in Interpersonal Skills and Attitude Development

Recently, some criminologists have emphasized the importance of attachment to a variety of social institutions such as marriage, work or school . . . Individuals form bonds with social institutions. As bonds strengthen, social capital rises. This capital supplies resources to solve problems. Dependence on capital means that much is jeopardized if it is lost. As bonds form and social capital increases, criminal activity becomes more costly.

Meaningful social bonds established during adulthood can function as critical life events or turning points when offenders begin to conform and turn away from criminal activity.

I propose that individual-level change must precede changes in ties or bonds to social institutions . . . The social environment may be conducive to the formation of ties, but the individual must change if the bond is to form . . . the person must change in cognitive reasoning, attitude toward drug use, anti-social attitudes, reading level, or vocation skills. This change (is) a cognitive transformation. Such transformations are necessary before a person makes initial moves toward a different way of life.

From this perspective two things are needed. First, a cognitive transformation must occur within the individual. Second, the individual environment must provide the opportunity for the bond or tie to form. An interaction between the individual and the environment is required.

Re-entry programs that focus on opportunities for work, reunite families and provide housing. . . will not be effective if there is not also a focus on individual-level transformation. The results from my review suggest that such opportunities should be preceded by programs focusing on changing the individual through cognitive change, education, or drug treatment.