Common Characteristics Found in Successful Juvenile Correctional Officers In Ohio

By

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements For the Degree of Master of Science In the Criminal Justice program

Youngstown State University

Spring 2010
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Successful Juvenile Correctional Officers in Ohio

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Abstract

Juvenile correctional officers (JCOs) are entrusted with the stressful and often thankless job of providing care to our nation’s troubled youth. They must embrace the ideals of youth service while practicing the role of a correctional officer. These two standards are often conflicting. However, their interactions with youth are important because these adolescents will one day become active members of society. JCOs can help determine if they are thriving participants or burdens to the public. Thus, it is important that the individuals given this important responsibility are not only capable but also successful. As they become weary and burnt out, they start to have a negative instead of positive impact on the youth under their care which only contributes to the failure of our already struggling juvenile justice system.

The question of this research project is whether a list of characteristics found among successful juvenile correctional officers in Ohio can be ascertained. There are three primary questions of this research. The first asks if a list of characteristics of a successful juvenile correctional officer can be ascertained. The second question asked by this research is whether experience or education is valued in juvenile correctional officers. The final question asked by this research is whether the age, sex, or years of experience affect the opinions of juvenile detention center supervisors in regards to what qualities they value in their juvenile correctional officers. In order to answer these questions, surveys were sent to each of the 40 juvenile detention center supervisors in Ohio. A total of 27 surveys were received for a response rate of 65.7%.
Responses indicated that professionalism, teamwork, and attendance/promptness are considered to be the most important factors of successful juvenile correctional officers. Additionally, experience is valued higher over education. Based on the characteristics of the respondents, only a few patterns could be ascertained among their answers. While all supervisors rated professionalism highly, those in their 30s were more likely to rate it as the most important characteristic among juvenile correctional officers. Men were also more likely to rate professionalism as the most important characteristic.

Another difference was found in regards to how men and women rate empathy. Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to rate empathy higher as an important characteristic.

This study was not a task analysis of juvenile correctional officers in Ohio and is not meant to document hiring criteria per se. The findings, however, do suggest issues and personal characteristics that could be part of background investigations and/or training programs.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this project to my mother, Alexis, whose steady love and support have given me the strength to overcome my own demons and continue on through life’s trials and tribulations. This project was possible because of her.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank:

First and foremost, the juvenile detention center supervisors for making this project a success. The response rate I received was exhilarating. It confirmed my belief that this is an area in which further research is needed in order to help our discipline succeed. Your feedback provided valuable insight and gave me the confidence to delve deeper to, hopefully, provide you with information that you will utilize and find useful.

The biggest influences in my life, my parents and sister—Joe, Alexis, and Molly. Everything I am is because of each of you and I consider myself lucky to have been blessed with a family who possesses such strength, love, and integrity. The fact that we enjoy each other’s company so much is just a bonus!!

My aunt, Jeanne, who is the best research assistant anyone could ever have. Her organizational skills were invaluable, her quick wit was refreshing, but it was her kindness and generosity that inspired me to produce the best project possible. I thank you dearly.

My husband, Jonathan, who deserves thanks for several reasons. First, for helping me whenever I needed him—even if it meant cleaning the house and doing the dishes! Second, for guiding me with suggestions when necessary but, more importantly, listening when it was what I needed most. Third, for supporting me and understanding how important completing this project was to me.

I would like to thank Dr. Tammy King, my thesis advisor. I have appreciated your guidance throughout every step of this project. I have truly enjoyed working with you—even if we are too much alike for our own good! I am also grateful for your guidance in my academic and professional careers. You have motivated me to set my goals higher and to believe that I can achieve them.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I want to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Jim Conser, Dr. John Hazy, and Mrs. Maggi Dourm for all of your knowledge and guidance throughout this project.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURES PAGE .................................................................................... ii
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................. iii
DEDICATION ............................................................................................... iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................................................................ v
TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................... vi
LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................... vii

## CHAPTERS

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. Statistics ............................................................................................... 2
2. Roles of a Correctional Officer .............................................................. 3
3. Challenges Faced by a Correctional Officer .......................................... 3
4. Juvenile Correctional Officers .............................................................. 4
5. Current Research Project ...................................................................... 5
6. Summary ............................................................................................... 7
7. Next Chapter ........................................................................................ 7

### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. History of Corrections ........................................................................ 10
2. History of the Juvenile Justice System ................................................. 13
3. Negative Consequences of Employing an Unsuccessful JCO ......... 20
4. Why Correctional Officers Leave Employment .................................. 24
5. Research Questions and Goal .............................................................. 32
6. Summary ............................................................................................... 33
7. Next Chapter ........................................................................................ 33

### III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design ................................................................................ 35
2. Research Questions and Goal .............................................................. 36
3. Data Collection ................................................................................... 37
4. Summary / Next Chapter .................................................................... 41

### IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1. Ohio’s Juvenile Detention Centers ...................................................... 42
2. Current Study ....................................................................................... 44
3. Section One—Personal Characteristics ............................................. 44
4. Section Two—Disciplinary Problems and Issues ............................... 45
5. Section Three—Experience vs. Education ....................................... 47
6. Section Four—Differences Among Supervisors .................................. 53
7. Summary ............................................................................................... 56
8. Next Chapter ........................................................................................ 57
V. CONCLUSION...................................................................................................................59
   Major Findings..............................................................................................................60
   Contributions..............................................................................................................63
   Limitations....................................................................................................................64
   Future Research..........................................................................................................66
   Summary.......................................................................................................................67

REFERENCES.....................................................................................................................68
APPENDIX A—Survey Instrument..................................................................................74
APPENDIX B—Cover Letter............................................................................................79
APPENDIX C—Approval from Human Subjects Review Committee...............................81

FIGURES

1. Biggest Disciplinary Issues and Problems Among JCOs...........................................46
2. Experience vs. Education ..........................................................................................48
3. Minimum Educational Requirement of JCOs............................................................48
4. Average Education Levels of JCOs............................................................................49
5. Required Experience of JCOs....................................................................................51
6. Additional Requirements of JCOs.............................................................................52
7. Education Level of Respondents...............................................................................55
8. Length of Service of Respondents............................................................................56
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Statistics

Juvenile detention centers are responsible for maintaining the safety of the community as well as providing essential care and services to the youth being detained within each facility (Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). In 1997, there were more than 1.7 million juvenile delinquency cases—a 48% increase from 1988 (Crowe, 2000, p. iii). In 83% of those cases, in which the juvenile was adjudicated delinquent, the youth was sentenced to a corrections sanction (Crowe, 2000, p. iii). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reported that in 2006 there were 92,854 juveniles housed in residential placement facilities across the nation (Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). The most common age of those juveniles placed in residential facilities is 16-years-old (Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 2008). The care of these juveniles is entrusted in the Juvenile Correctional Officers (JCOs) working within the facilities. JCOs oversee the detained youths throughout their daily activities while housed at the various detention facilities across the nation. Their responsibilities include: ensuring the safety of the residents, maintaining order, and providing discipline when necessary.

JCOs are not completely unlike their adult counterparts. The criminal justice system, which is geared towards adult offenders, has some of the same goals as the juvenile justice system. The primary goal of each is to protect society. In order to do so, each system provides laws to follow and punishments, sanctions, and/or treatments for laws broken. It is within the latter group that correctional officers are most vital. These
individuals supervise approximately 12 million people every year (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). Their responsibilities include: maintaining security and inmate accountability, monitoring and supervising the activities of the inmates, and ensuring that the inmates are orderly and obey rules (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). Working in correctional institutions can be stressful and hazardous yet correctional officers are not trained as are law enforcement officers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). Instead, the only training provided is that which they learn within their own work environments (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). This is the norm for most correctional officers at the juvenile level. JCOs must also remain aware of the delicate and naïve nature of the inmates they are supervising.

**Roles of a Correctional Officer**

Correctional officers have many responsibilities. They must maintain security and inmate accountability to prevent disturbances, assaults, and escapes (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). In order to do so, they must uphold order within the institution by ensuring that inmates are orderly and follow the rules and regulations. This is done by monitoring their activities and supervising the work assignments. They must also learn to work together to maintain order in the facility and to keep everyone safe from physical harm (Bartollas, Miller, & Dinitz, 1976; Feld, 1977; Inderbitzin, 2006; Polsky, 1962). Additional requirements include documenting all daily activities and movements of prisoners or detainees, processing new detainees or
prisoners, providing for the general security of the building, and contributing to department objectives.

Correctional officers are to conduct a number of inspections within the facility. First, they must search inmates for any contraband such as drugs or weapons they may have on them (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). They must also inspect the facilities, including inmate cells or other inmate-accessible areas, for unsanitary conditions, contraband, fire hazards, or any evidence of rule infractions. Additional inspections are required of windows, doors, or any other exits to ensure security. Correctional officers must also inspect all items being brought into the facility. This includes mail, clothing, hygiene products, medications, or any other items a facility may allow an inmate. Finally, correctional officers are required to search and inspect visitors for any prohibited items (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). It is not uncommon for a correctional officer to be subjected to a search or inspection him- or herself. This precaution is another characteristic of a highly secure institution.

Challenges Faced by Correctional Officers

All correctional officers, both adult and juvenile, are subjected to hazardous and stressful work environments (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Last updated December 18, 2007). Correctional officers are hurt every year while on the job. In fact, except for police officers, correctional officers report the highest number of workplace nonfatal violent incidents per 1,000 employees (Finn, 2001, p. 2). Between 1992 and 1996, there
were a total of 58,300 of these incidents (Finn, 2001, p. 2). In a secure correctional setting, any item that may seem harmless can be converted into a weapon.

Other sources attributed to the high stress levels of correctional officers include: organization-related conditions such as understaffing, overtime, shift work, and unreasonable demands. Other work-related sources of stress include: the threat of inmate violence, actual inmate violence, inmate demands and manipulation, problems with coworkers, a poor public image, and pay (Finn, 2001, p. 2). If a correctional officer is ill-equipped to handle these stressors, he or she may be hindered to perform his or her job effectively. This may jeopardize the safety of everyone in the institution (Finn, 2001).

**Juvenile Correctional Officers**

There are differences for correctional officers working with juveniles as opposed to those working with adults. First, the philosophical foundation of the juvenile justice system places greater emphasis on staff acting in the best interests of youth receiving correctional services (Howe, Clawson, & Larivee, 2007). Juvenile correctional officers must balance the punitive role that dominates the role of an adult correctional officer with the rehabilitative goals inherent in their own (Dembo & Dertke, 1986; Poole & Pogrebin, 1988). Second, JCOs are sometimes asked to be a part of the youths’ academic efforts. Third, there are discretionary issues to be concerned with when dealing with juveniles. Because they are not adults, JCOs must be cautious about with whom they share information.
One of the biggest differences between juvenile and adult corrections is that JCOs have greater interaction with residents’ families, specifically their guardians. This is problematic for several reasons. First, it is sometimes difficult to make a parent be accountable, or even present, for their child’s needs while he or she is housed at a detention facility. On the other end of the spectrum, some parents are incessant with their questions and concerns. Third, JCOs must remain aware of who retains custody of a resident. A youth’s biological mother or father does not make them automatically responsible for the child and, thus, unable to receive updates and information while the youth are housed at the detention facility. This failure to share information extends to other family members as well (Champion, 2007).

Current Research Project

The question being posed by this research is whether or not there are certain characteristics of a juvenile correctional officer that helps him or her be successful. If five to seven qualities are ascertained, then the next step would be to determine if, and/or how, it is possible to determine these qualities prior to employment. These characteristics can then be used by administration during the hiring and training processes of the facility. Employers would not have to wait until a person is hired before determining whether he or she will be a benefit to their facility.

For the purposes of this study, we believe a successful correctional officer to be an individual who is considered an asset to any detention facility. One important attribute would include following all detention center rules and regulations. Also, such individuals would treat residents in a “firm, fair, and consistent” manner. In general, a
successful juvenile correctional officer contributes to the success and efficiency of the detention center in which he or she is employed.

The importance of this study is to help the juvenile justice system be more successful. As stated earlier, the goals and ideals of this system are different than those of the criminal justice system. Rehabilitation and treatment are favored over punishment and retribution. One reason for this difference is because of the immaturity and naiveté of the youths involved, but the other reason is because these individuals are our future. It is important for all of us that these programs succeed in rehabilitating these juveniles so that they may become successful, contributing members of society. Juvenile correctional officers have a large role in the deliverance of such treatments to those youth detained in detention centers. If they are unsuccessful at their jobs, the rehabilitation of the youth involved is jeopardized.

There are several consequences of an unsuccessful juvenile correctional officer. The first is cost. Turnover among these individuals results in more money spent by the institutions and counties to rehire and train their replacements. Secondly, an unsuccessful JCO can result in a negative work environment which will compromise the overall success of the detention facility. They can cause strife among coworkers and work will not get done. Finally, an unsuccessful JCO can be a safety hazard. Improper work ethics and procedures can compromise the security of the facility and result in harm, to not only the residents, but coworkers as well (Bartollas, Miller, & Dinitz, 1976; Feld, 1977; Inderbitzin, 2006; Polsky, 1962). These negative consequences of an unsuccessful JCO are all reasons as to why investigation into successful qualities of a JCO is important.
Summary

Juvenile corrections officers are entrusted with providing direct care for the juveniles being held in detention facilities across the nation. They play a critical role in shaping the responses of youths in custody (Frazier & Cochran, 1986). The juvenile justice system is designed differently than that of the criminal justice system which was designed primarily for adults (Champion, 2007). Juvenile correctional officers face many of the same problems and issues, such as job burnout, high stress levels, and high turnover rates as their adult counterparts (Liou, 1995; Wells, Minor, Angel, Matz, & Amato, 2009). There are some additional issues that are particular to JCOs because they are working with youth. This is because they must join elements of youth service responsibilities with the expectations of correctional officers in adult jails or prisons (Dembo & Dertke, 1986; Poole & Pogrebin, 1988).

There is a high number of America’s youth currently housed in juvenile detention facilities across the nation. While all correctional facilities seek to protect society by keeping individuals deemed harmful to society out of the community, juvenile detention facilities must also balance the rehabilitative goals promulgated by the juvenile justice system. This requires juvenile correctional officers to be guided by two different, and oftentimes, conflicting goals: punishment and rehabilitation.

Next Chapter

The next chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to this study. Several sections are provided. The first one discusses the history of corrections within the United States. The second section provide an overview of the juvenile justice system and its
history. Topics include the Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1899, the doctrine of *parens patriae*, important court cases, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, and the differences that separate it from the criminal justice system utilized by adults. The following section then discusses problems faced juvenile detention facilities when they employ unsuccessful juvenile correctional officers. The final section of Chapter Two reviews reasons for which correctional officers leave employment.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In an effort to research the qualities of a successful juvenile correctional officer (JCO), a detailed review of the juvenile justice system and the role of JCOs must be reviewed and evaluated. First, an overview is provided on the history of corrections in the United States. It focuses on how society’s views on crime and criminals have developed since our nation’s beginning and how these opinions, when combined with other movements and trends, have influenced the criminal justice system. The next section is a synopsis of the juvenile justice system. It reviews why it was established, the underlying beliefs it was founded on, how it has developed over the last century, and the differences that separate it from the criminal justice system. The third section reviews the negative effects associated with an unsuccessful juvenile correctional officer. These consequences include: high turnover rates, compromised effectiveness and efficiency of a facility compromised security, and corruption. In the final section of this chapter, an additional review of the reasons juvenile correctional officers leave employment is presented. Such motives include a better employment opportunity, inadequate salary, termination, and burnout. The research hypotheses and goals of this research project are reviewed at the end of the chapter as well as a brief outline of what is expected in Chapter Three.
Early American colonists did not believe crime to be a social problem. Instead, they viewed criminals as sinners and thus imposed penalties that often included death, banishment, or various forms of corporal punishment (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 7). In the 1700s, reformers like William Penn and Benjamin Rush advocated imprisonment, fines and other non-humiliating forms of punishment that combined rehabilitation and reform with deterrence (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, pp. 7-8). Some of America’s first prisons and prison systems, like the Walnut Street Jail (1776) and the Pennsylvania (1820s) and Auburn (1820s) prison model systems, furthered these ideals by offering educational opportunities, religious and healthcare services, and separate living quarters as they sought their goal of rehabilitation (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, pp. 8-9; Champion, 2007). Unfortunately, in the late 1800s, these rehabilitative efforts were replaced with disciplinary controls due to overcrowding, poor management, and insufficient funding that was exasperated by the shift in resources to the Civil War (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 10).

Further influencing corrections was the National Prison Association (later known as the American Correctional Association) when, after meeting in 1870, it began promoting the ideas of Alexander Maconochie and Walter Crofton (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 10). They developed reformative practices that included stages of imprisonment, a “mark system” which allowed prisoners to be released early for good behavior, and indeterminate sentencing (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 11). Work and industrial programs were also developed to establish strong work ethics and offer vocational training for inmates (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 11). The
Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) was created in 1930 which had significant effect on corrections (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 12). This organization sought new innovative and effective practices for institutions. One such development was the requirement of professional personnel like physicians and psychiatrists for classifying and diagnosing inmates (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 12).

Following the end of World War II, when Americans were attempting to revamp society, prisoners came to be viewed as “good guys” who were merely misunderstood (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, p. 12). While professional psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers were treating the men and women traumatized by the war, prison officials began to advocate and implement similar programming to diagnose prisoners’ problems in order to rehabilitate them successfully (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, pp. 12-13). Garrett Heyns, who was the president of the American Prison Association (APA) at the time, was a major advocate for this shift towards what would eventually be called the medical model (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, pp. 12-13). A central belief of this model was that society carried some responsibility for what happened in criminal justice and corrections.

The political uprisings of the 1960s eventually had its effect on corrections. As the conservative public began to question the underlying ideas of the medical model, the American youth who were at the time embracing more free-spirited and “hippie” attitudes began questioning any and all governmental controls. Because the U.S. Supreme Court had discarded its hands-off approach to corrections in 1941 when it ruled in *Ex Parte Hull* that inmates had no limitations on their right to access all federal and state courts through petitions. Prison officials and personnel were under constant scrutiny (Carlson,
Roth, & Travisono, 2008, pp. 14-15; Champion, 2007, p. 193). Another major setback of the medical model included an incident with an inmate named Willie Horton. As part of a newly implemented furlough system in which an inmate could leave the premises for educational, work, or familial purposes, while Horton was unescorted, he brutally attacked a young couple. Shortly thereafter, a damaging report was written by Robert Martinson in 1974 in which he described what was commonly called the “nothing works syndrome” (Carlson, Roth, & Travisono, 2008, pp. 15-16). This report promulgated that rehabilitative programs within correctional facilities were futile and had no effect on recidivism rates. Society showed interest in the report’s assertions, even though some believed they were derived from false information, and eventually halted attempts to evolve such programs.

Inevitably, the public began to desire a more punitive approach to corrections. Harsher sentences have become widespread and common. Overcrowding is a constant concern among American correctional institutions. In 2005, there were over two million Americans housed in either a prison or jail (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Because of the overwhelming number of individuals entering correctional institutions, the number of individuals being released also increased. It would be naïve, and an err in judgment, to ignore the importance of addressing some of the problems of these individuals before they are released back into society.

Prior to the establishment of the juvenile justice system, youth were treated the same as adults. Mimicking eighteenth century England, children ages seven and older were subject to the same penalties as adults including banishment, transportation, and even the death penalty (Champion, 2007, pp. 7-9). When they were imprisoned, it was
with men and women, young and old. Instead of learning morals and values from their parents and family members during their young and impressionable years, they were learning from criminals and deviants. It was not uncommon for juveniles to leave institutions more seasoned criminals. Other atrocities were commonplace in such institutions as juveniles, being much smaller and inexperienced, were left with no supervision or protection from bigger and older criminals and deviants (Champion, 2007, pp. 7-8). Such practices continued until society realized it was necessary to develop a separate system for youth that not only protected them, but instilled the proper values necessary to become a successful member of society.

**History of the Juvenile Justice System**

**The Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1899**

Prior to 1900, youth were subjected to the harsh treatments of the criminal justice system. Their immature nature led people to believe that they were not fully aware of the gravity of their actions and, thus, should not be held accountable in the same manner as adults would be. Hence, the juvenile justice system was developed in 1899 under the Act to Regulate the Treatment and Control of Dependent, Neglected and Delinquent Children, otherwise known as the Illinois Juvenile Court Act (Champion, 2007, pp. 13-14). Its jurisdiction included all juveniles under the age of 16. Since then, various courts have expanded their authority to include youth up until the age of 18 years old. The Illinois Juvenile Court Act of 1899 was purposely ambiguous in order to allow sufficient latitude for judges and other personnel in interpreting juvenile behavior (Champion, 2007, p. 16).
**Parens Patriae**

When the juvenile courts were established throughout the United States, they adopted a rehabilitative philosophy. The underlying doctrine utilized by the juvenile justice system is that of *parens patriae*. This principle originated in England during the twelfth century and established that the right of parentage is not exclusive and definitive (Champion, 2007, p. 11). Instead, the underlying idea behind *parens patriae* is that parents are merely agents working for the state in raising their children. Thus, the state can usurp their parental rights in the best interest of the state. In *Schall v. Martin* (1984), the Court held that juveniles are subject to parental and State controls because they, “unlike adults, are always in some form of custody” (Crowe, 2000, p. 27).

**Important Juvenile Court Cases**

Unfortunately, juvenile court judges often abused their discretionary power which undermined the goals of the system. Juveniles continued to receive harsh penalties for often nonviolent minor behaviors. This remained until *In re Gault* (1967). This landmark case ruled that juveniles must be afforded all rights of due process during delinquency hearings. These include the right to counsel, the right to confront his or her accuser, the right to be notified of the charges being brought against him or her, the right to cross-examine, and the right against self-incrimination (*In re Gault*, 1967). Since then, the juvenile justice system has taken on many of the same trends and practices synonymous with the criminal justice system. In the case of *In re Winship* (1970), the court established that “beyond a reasonable doubt” be the standard of proof in juvenile trials instead of the previously utilized “preponderance of innocence” (Champion, 2007, p. 201.) These cases established criminal guidelines for delinquency cases that caused
the juvenile justice system to operate in a more bureaucratic manner (Feld, 1993). So many practices are correlated between both systems that some have argued that there may no longer be a need for two separate systems (McKeiver v. Pennsylvania, 1971). In *McKeiver v. Pennsylvania* (1971), Justice Blackmun stated that:

“If the formalities of the criminal adjudicative process are to be superimposed upon the juvenile court system, there is little need for its separate existence. Perhaps this ultimate disillusionment will come one day, but for the moment, we are disinclined to impetus to it” (403 U.S. at 551).

According to Champion (2007), these important cases impacted juvenile justice in five ways (p. 205). First, juveniles began receiving more reasonable and fair treatment because of the limits imposed on the discretion of juvenile court judges. Second, the new orientation of justice provided a greater certainty of punishment. Third, dispositions became less informal and treatments less individualized. Fourth, juveniles were more likely to acquire a record because of the heightened formality of the proceedings. Finally, there was a greater likelihood of juvenile waivers to criminal courts. These cases, however, were not the only sources of change within the juvenile justice system. Legislative efforts, such as the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, were also influential on its development.

**The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974**

The juvenile justice system has been profoundly impacted by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) of 1974 (Tyler & Segady, 2000, p. 81). First, it sanctioned the establishment of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) (Tyler & Segady, 2000). The mission of this office is “to provide national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent juvenile victimization and
respond appropriately to juvenile delinquency” (Tyler & Segady, 2000, p. 81). Second, the JJDPA has created a formula grant program for states’ juvenile justice systems. In order to receive these funds, which are the major source of federal funding to improve states’ juvenile justice systems, states are required to maintain these core protections for children: deinstitutionalization of status offenders (DSO); adult jail and lock-up removal; sight and sound separation; and disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) (Champion, 2007, p. 56). These mandates have been accepted almost universally and have been a catalyst for other reform initiatives in juvenile justice (Leiber, 2002). While there have been many positive outcomes to the JJDPA, there have been two major impacts.

The first requirement of the Act, DSO, had a large impact on the juvenile justice system. It established that youth who have committed of status offenses, which are offenses that apply only to children, are not to be held in secure detention or confinement for any length of time (Champion, 2007, p. 56). DSO is usually achieved through one of three ways. The first is decarceration which is the actual removal of status offenders from secure juvenile institutions (Champion, 2007, p. 59). The second is diverting dependent and neglected children to social services. Diversion programs are one example of how this requirement can be met. These programs accept youth from law enforcement officials, parents, etc. to provide crisis intervention services in hopes of diverting them away from the justice system. The third way DSO is achieved is through divestiture of jurisdiction. Divestiture states that juvenile courts cannot detain, petition, adjudicate, or place youths on probation or in institutions for any status offense (Champion, 2007, p. 59-61).
The second requirement of the JJDPA states that juveniles may not be detained in adult jails except in one of the following special circumstances: (a) for a limited amount of time (6 hours) before or after a court hearing; (b) in a rural setting (24 hours plus weekends and holidays); or (c) unsafe travel conditions. According to Champion (2007), children who have been housed in either an adult jail or lockup are “eight times more likely to commit suicide, five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, two times more likely to be assaulted by staff, and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon” than juveniles housed in a juvenile facility (Champion, 2007, p. 56).

There were two additional requirements of the JJDPA. The first was in regards to situations previously mentioned in which a juvenile, under an exceptional circumstance, must be housed in an adult facility for a short amount of time. If a juvenile is to be temporarily housed in an adult jail or lockup, there must be “sight and sound” separation from all adult inmates. The second requirement, DMC, requires states to gather information on the disproportionate confinement of minority juvenile in secure facilities and assess the reason for it (Champion, 2007, p. 56).

Unfortunately there was a temporary rise in juvenile crime in the 1980s and 1990s that caused society to reassess the effectiveness of these reforms. The media’s intense coverage of this rising trend led to society’s exaggerated sense of vulnerability which culminated in harsher and more punitive responses to juvenile crime (Merlo & Benekos, 2003; Kappeler, 2000). Society became concerned with ensuring that “the punishment fit the crime.” In other words, they advocated “individualized responses that considered the circumstances and nature of the adolescent were displaced by legislation prescribing
decisions based on the category and nature of the offense” (Merlo & Benekos, 2003, p. 277).

The changes in society, important court cases, and legislative efforts we have just reviewed have all caused dramatic changes in the juvenile justice system. However, there are some differences that are built inherently into it that continue to distinguish it from the criminal justice system. The following section provides a summary of these differences.

**Differences of the Juvenile Justice System**

Despite a lot of similarities, there are some notable differences between the two systems. The juvenile justice system stresses a nonadversarial approach to juvenile justice. It utilizes terms like “delinquent” and “disposition” in lieu of “criminal” and “sentence” (Champion, 2007, p. 177). Because youth are believed to be more amenable to change and less likely to benefit from punitive action, the premise of the juvenile justice system is rehabilitation (Moon, Sundt, Cullen, & Wright, 2000). It understands that juveniles have not yet reached the level of maturity that carries with it full responsibility for their actions. Furthermore, the vulnerability of youth indicates that they stand to benefit more from rehabilitative programming and treatments than do adults.

The juvenile justice system looks at the individual characteristics of the offender instead of their charges or crimes. Their actions are rarely direct consequences of their own decisions. It was believed that juveniles’ behaviors were expressions or manifestations of some underlying problem that warranted attention and could ultimately be fixed, not just them behaving badly because they are themselves bad or evil (Roush, 1996). Their vulnerability towards their surroundings often compels them to commit
delinquent acts. In the juvenile justice system, distinctions are made between behaviors considered criminal for adults and behavior deemed inappropriate for juveniles. Juvenile crime was now seen as evidence of delinquency and, thus, the court’s task is to guide delinquents toward a responsible and productive adulthood. Juvenile acts such as “frequenting places where any gaming devise was operated” and “status offenses of incorrigibility and a livelihood of idleness or crime” were two defining acts of juvenile delinquency (Roush, 1996, p. 7). This definition was eventually broadened to include running away from home, loitering, and profanity.

As one can see, juvenile correctional officers have additional adjustments to consider while adapting themselves to an ever-changing justice system. The role of a juvenile correctional officer combines elements of relatively ambiguous youth service responsibilities with elements of expectations for correctional officers in adult prisons or jails (Dembo & Dertke, 1986; Poole & Pogrebin, 1988). This conflicting orientation of balancing punishment and rehabilitation may result in juvenile correctional officer experiencing added stress (Inderbitzin, 2006, p. 432). As frontline staff members, they must take on the roles of surrogate parents, corrections officers, counselors, and guardians of the state’s most serious “problem children” (Inderbitzin, 2006, p. 432). As argued by Inderbitzin (2006), juvenile correctional officers must set the tone of the facility as they help define the institutional experience for juvenile offenders. Their training, sophistication, and resources affect the extent of harm that may be caused to juvenile detainees (Frazier, 1989, p. 158).

These two conflicting goals of juvenile correctional officers often cause strain. This strain can lead to stress or other bigger, more serious problems which can ultimately
have negative consequences for detention facilities. These consequences, as well as additional problems faced by detention centers when they employ unsuccessful JCOs, are reviewed in the next section.

*Negative Consequences of an Unsuccessful Juvenile Correctional Officer*

There are negative consequences to employing a correctional officer at any facility—adult or juvenile, high- or minimum-security, prison or jail, etc. All such facilities should be wary of these issues: high turnover rates, compromised effectiveness and efficiency; corruption; and compromised security. For this research, the concern is focused on juvenile detention centers and how these consequences affect them.

**High Turnover Rates**

High turnover rates among correctional officers are a constant problem for the criminal justice system (Udechukwu, Harrington, Manyak, Segal, & Graham, 2007). In a Texas study, the most common length of service, before leaving the position of juvenile correctional and detention officer, was one year or less (53.3%) while two years of service held at 20.9% (Tolbert, Davenport, Friedman, Haghghi, & Schwank, 2000). These turnover rates have a negative affect on a juvenile detention facility. First, the constant disruption among coworkers is counterproductive. Second, employing new and inexperienced JCOs compromises a facility’s security. Third, high turnover is a major financial burden on facilities.

A follow-up study for fiscal year 2002 of the Juvenile Probation Department Personnel in Texas showed that there were significantly higher turnover rates among specialized officers and line officers than among chiefs and administrators (Texas
Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003). The original report done in August 2000 showed that juvenile detention and corrections officers had a turnover rate that was almost double that of other State of Texas employees: 31.4% compared to private sectors (14.9%), Texas state employees (17.6%), and line juvenile probation officers (19.7%) (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Research and Planning Division, 2000). The follow-up study in 2003 also reported that nearly two-thirds (65.8%) of the juvenile detention/corrections officers had been at their job for less than two years before resigning (The Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003). These high turnover rates across Texas have resulted in a lack of experienced officers (Tolbert, Davenport, Friedman, Haghighi, & Schwank, 2000).

As with any business, one must employ effective employees in order for it to be successful. The same is true for juvenile detention centers. In order for such a facility to be successful, it must detain and rehabilitate juvenile offenders. To accomplish this goal, there are important factors such as the detention environment, the detention workers, and the nature of the interactions between the detainees and those responsible for their care and custody (Bazemore, Dicker, & Nyhan, 1994, p. 40).

An additional concern with high turnover rates is the financial burden that ensues. The United States Department of Labor estimates that replacing an employee costs approximately one-third of a new hire’s annual salary while a human resources consulting company places that estimation closer to 50% (State Auditor’s Office, 2000). When considering juvenile probation, detention, and correctional officers, the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission estimated that the total cost of turnover for Texas in 2002 was between $5.1 and $7.7 million (Tolbert, Davenport, Friedman, Haghighi, &
Schwank, 2000; Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003). These costs involve recruiting, training and orientation, salary and benefits during training and orientation, and lost productivity during the time the position is vacant and during the time the employee is learning the job (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003).

**Compromised Facility Effectiveness / Efficiency**

Programs and services that are offered to juvenile offenders are negatively impacted by high turnover rates. This in turn negatively influences the overall success of the facility (Tolbert et al., 2000). This is because JCOs are required to make daily decisions that impact the safety and lives of youthful offenders as well as fellow detention center personnel (Tolbert et al., 2000). The quality of these decisions is jeopardized when new and inexperienced officers are involved because it takes time for an employee at a secure facility to become accustomed to the rules, procedures, and precautions of at that particular facility (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Research and Planning Division, 2000, p. 25). This also decreases positive client outcomes. Juvenile correctional facilities must understand the importance of maintaining a stable, experienced, and competent workforce as a significant factor in rehabilitating the children of the juvenile justice system (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Research and Planning Division, 2000).

**Compromised Security**

As stated earlier, successful JCOs must learn to work together to maintain order in the facility and to keep everyone safe from physical harm (Bartollas, Miller, & Dinitz, 1976; Feld, 1977; Inderbitzin, 2006; Polsky, 1962). This is not always easy because they
are often left without adequate resources and/or training while also managing the structural restraints that are inherent in the institution and the job (Bortner & Williams, 1997; Gordon, Moriarty, & Grant, 2003; Mitchell, MacKenzie, Gover, & Styve, 2001; Tracy, 2004). High turnover diminishes security even further with new untrained and inexperienced officers working the front lines and supervising detained youth (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Research and Planning Division, 2000).

**Corruption**

An unsuccessful employee may be the result of corruption or corruptive behaviors in the facility. He or she could be corrupted. Such an employee will bring drugs into a facility, undermine the authority of coworkers or supervisors, engage in sexual misconduct with inmates, and/or engage in other forms of dishonest, inappropriate, or immoral behaviors. The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has defined sexual misconduct as:

“any behavior or act of a sexual nature by an employee, contractor, service provider, volunteer, or any persons or entities acting on behalf of a correctional agency to (a) a person under the care or custody of the department or agency, (b) any collateral contact of an offender not related to correctional purposes, (c) victims of their families, or (d) any other persons who have official contact with the department or agency on behalf of offenders, such as lawyers or social workers. Staff sexual misconduct includes, but is not limited to: acts or attempts to commit acts such as sexual assault, abuse, and harassment; actions designed for sexual gratification of any party; conduct of a sexual nature or implication; obscenity unreasonable invasion of privacy; inappropriate viewing; or conversations or correspondence which suggests a romantic or sexual relationship” (McCampbell & Layman, 2000).

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) defines a particular act by a staff member of sexual misconduct as “any behavior or act of a sexual nature directed toward an inmate by an employee, volunteer, official visitor, or agency representative” (Beck & Hughes, 2005, p.
To further clarify, the BJS has determined sexual harassment to include “repeated verbal statements or comments of a sexual nature to an inmate by an employee, volunteer, official visitor, or agency representative, including demeaning references to gender or derogatory comments about body or clothing; or profane or obscene language or gestures” (Beck & Hughes, 2005, p. 3). In 2005 and 2006, there were 295 substantiated incidents of sexual violence involving staff-on-youth (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). Of these incidents, sexual misconduct comprised 28% while sexual harassment accounted for 8%. Juvenile correctional officers described two-thirds of them as “romantic relationships” or cases in which the juvenile appeared to be willing (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2008). Inappropriate force or pressure was involved in approximately 10% of the substantiated incidents involving staff-on-youth violence.

Why Correctional Officers Leave Employment

In order to look at what comprises a successful juvenile correctional officer, one must investigate what are some indicators of an unsuccessful one. To begin this evaluation, the reasons a JCO leaves his or her job were explored. The first reason is because he or she may be looking for a better employment opportunity. In a study of Texas JCOs, 25.2% of them left employment because a better job opportunity became available (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003, p. 11). A second reason as to why juvenile correctional officers have a short employment span is inadequate salaries (Tolbert, Davenport, Friedman, Haghighi, & Schwank, 2000). A third contributing factor to the short employment span of JCOs is that many are terminated from their positions due to professional misconduct. Finally, burnout is an issue among all correctional
officers and is often a driving force behind a correctional officers’ decision to resign from his or her job (Farmer, 1988). This is often due to the high levels of stress associated with the job of a corrections officer.

**Advancement / Other Employment Opportunities**

One of the primary reasons an individual leaves a juvenile correctional officer position is because he or she advances to another position. Generally this includes being promoted to management or administration within the juvenile detention center itself or another similar facility (U. S. Department of Labor, 2007). Another type of promotion would be moving to a juvenile probation officer position. In fact, based on the personal experience of this researcher, many of the juvenile probation officers in Ohio were originally employed as juvenile correctional officers. In a Texas follow-up study, on turnover rates among juvenile probation department personnel, 25.2% of juvenile detention/corrections officers left because a better job opportunity became available (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003, p. 11). The unfortunate truth is that few individuals harbor the ambition to become a juvenile correctional officer; instead, it is a mere stepping stone in their career path to a “bigger and better” position (Udechukwu et al., 2007). Like other jobs, one has to start at the bottom and work their way up. In juvenile justice, the role of juvenile detention line officer is, unfortunately, the bottom.

**Inadequate Salary Level**

The reason most often cited as to why JCO leaves employment is inadequate salary levels (Tolbert, Davenport, Friedman, Haghighi, & Schwank, 2000; Udechukwu, Harrington, Manyak, Segal, & Graham, 2007). In a Texas study of juvenile correctional
authorities, 90% of juvenile probation and correctional officers ranked an increase in pay as their top recommendation for retaining current employees (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Research and Planning Division, 2000). This study also showed an inverse relationship between salary and turnover. The highest amount of turnover was with those detention and corrections officers and state employees making $25,000 or less. Those earning $40,001 or higher were least likely to resign from their current positions (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, Research and Planning Division, 2000, p. 24).

Termination

Another common reason for JCOs to leave employment is because they are terminated or resign in lieu of involuntary separation. In the Texas study previously cited, this was the most commonly cited reason for JCO’s departure (28%) (Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, 2003). In fact, out of all personnel employed in Texas juvenile probation departments, detention and corrections officers comprised the largest percent of those who were terminated or resigned in lieu of involuntary separation from the facility.

There are a variety of reasons for a JCO’s termination. These behaviors include: sexual misconduct, unprofessionalism, abuse of sick or vacation time, physical inability to perform his or her duties, and insubordination (Dupre, 2008; Mills, 2008; Perverted Justice Foundation, 2008; Ryan, 2008; U. S. Department of Justice, 2009). Examples would include, but are not limited to:

- when a JCO stands by and allows a resident to be mistreated, either physical or any other form
• while he or she does nothing to prevent this injustice from happening (this includes mistreatment by other staff members as well as other residents)
• abuse of sick or vacation time, tardiness, and/or abuse of other privileges
• failure to follow detention center or supervisor’s rule and/or instructions.

A JCO may be terminated because he or she is behaving unprofessionally. This encompasses a variety of behaviors. One example would be smuggling drugs or alcohol into a facility (Mulvey, 2009; Nagel, 2009). Other reasons include making false statements to officials or falsifying documents or records (WorldNow and WTOL, 2009). Another reason for termination would be when a CO oversteps the staff-inmate boundary. This may include helping a resident to escape, commit a crime, hurt another inmate, or even another staff member (The Associated Press, 2008). Abuse of inmates and, as stated earlier, sexual misconduct will also result in an employee’s termination (The Associated Press, 2009; Press Release, 2008).

**Burnout**

Another reason for JCO turnover is burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981a) defined burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind” (p. 99). In addition to turnover, it has also been associated with poor quality of care, absenteeism, use of alcohol and drugs, insomnia, and family problems (Maslach C., 1979; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Pines & Maslach, 1978). Work load, role ambiguity, and excessive amount of direct contact with clients have all been identified as leading to burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach C., 1976; Maslach & Jackson, 1981a; Maslach & Jackson, 1981b). Support
among co-workers has been found to be both a preventative measure and a remedy for burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach C., 1976; Pines & Maslach, 1978).

Another major contributor to burnout is the high stress levels associated with the job. Correctional officers are known to have one of the most stressful of all occupations (Cooper, Cooper, & Eaker, 1988). In most of the professions that require staff members to provide direct care to individuals displaying aggressiveness or personal distress, stress and risk of burnout are almost always a factor (Cooper M., 1989; Dembo & Dertke, 1986; Phelan, 1990). This is because of the high amounts of stress encountered on a daily basis. In 2007 at Marion Juvenile Correctional Facility in Ohio, approximately half of the staff left in their $15.80-an-hour job due to frustration, fear, and fatigue after only a few days (Ludlow, 2008). Also relevant, burnout has been found to be the greatest among young workers (Maslach, 1982). In a study by Auerbach, Quick, and Pegg (2003) on sources of stress among JCOs, they found the top five stressors to be:

1. Inadequate number of personnel
2. Lack of support by agency
3. Long hours on the job
4. Inadequate equipment
5. Agency rules and regulations

This study shows an interesting difference between JCOs and adult corrections officers. The latter were found to rate certain stressors differently than JCOs:

1. Inadequate number of personnel
2. Dealing with aggressive inmates
3. Hazardous situations
4. Risk of physical attack

5. Inadequate equipment

Unlike their adult counterparts, JCOs seem to be more stressed out with their work environment than by the residents whose care is entrusted in them. This could be explained in two different ways. First, juveniles are usually smaller in stature, thus, JCOs may not feel threatened by them physically. Second, JCOs may view the juveniles they oversee as not currently having the mental ability to be as devious or ingenious as adults in devising plans and crafting weapons.

One of the underlying causes of this stress is the volatile environment one must endure when working among delinquents and offenders. A JCO is trained to be on guard at all times. He or she is always at risk of being attacked by one or more of the residents (Finn, 2001). Also, he or she is responsible for maintaining order within the facility. This often includes confronting a resident which can possibly turn into a physical altercation. Aside from being concerned with his or her own safety and the safety of his or her fellow officers, a JCO must also be concerned with the safety of the offenders. If they must engage in a physical altercation with a juvenile resident, there are extra precautions he or she must take because he or she is dealing with a child. Special defense classes are required that are different from those taken by correctional officers who work with adult offenders.

Oftentimes, one JCO is responsible for a dozen or more residents at a time. This leaves a JCO at an automatic disadvantage which heightens his or her anxiety and stress levels. Not only is he or she aware of the potential risk to his- or herself, but they must also be aware of any potential harm to any of the residents. Another stressful aspect of a
JCO’s job is the potential harm one faces after a certain resident is released from confinement. There is always the worry that one of the residents will try to harm a JCO or a JCO’s family once released.

Like all correctional officers, JCOs must be on the lookout for any and all items that can be used to harm themselves or others. Such items include toothbrushes, locks, safety razors and broke glass (Biermann, 2007). Because of the large amount of time inmates and detention residents have, there is no limit to their ingenuity when it comes to devising weapons. Here are just some examples.

These weapons were all created by inmates (Drenttel, 2006). The shiv on the left is a piece of wood with 11 razor blades inserted along the sides. Tape is used to hold it together and allow for the inmate to handle it comfortably. The next is a spoon whose end has been filed down razor sharp. The third weapon was devised out of a prison-issued typewriter with tape wrapped around one end to form a handle. The final one is a shard of plexiglas with a handle made out of tape.
These weapons have all been found and confiscated in secure prison facilities (Delana, 2006-2009). They are all extremely dangerous and can be used against a correctional officer at any time. Even the candy bar can be used as a weapon if it is melted down to a boiling mixture and then thrown into someone’s face. This would be not only painful, but hard to remove as it will quickly cool and harden.

These weapons and assaults are not limited to adult correctional officers. In 2007, Marion Juvenile Correctional Facility, which houses 294 of Ohio’s oldest and most problematic juvenile offenders, reported 188 youth-on-staff assaults (Ludlow, 2008). Results of these assaults included a broken nose, a slash across the face, choking, unconsciousness, bites, a blown-out knee and the indignity of being doused with milk cartons filled with urine. These JCOs and other prison officials missed the equivalent of seven years of workdays in 2007 alone due to injuries and disabilities. Staff members were often sent to the hospital in groups of four, five, or six (Ludlow, 2008). On April 29, 2009, a juvenile correctional officer died as a result of an altercation with a juvenile inmate at the Cuyahoga Hills Juvenile Correctional Facility (Officer Down Memorial Page, 2010). These types of abuse can lead to an excessive use of force by guards which, in turn, can lead to lying on reports, cover-ups, injuries to inmates, and/or legal actions. Some of the injuries reported by inmates at Marion Juvenile Correctional Facility as a
result of excessive force by staff included a broken arm, a dislocated shoulder, head injuries, and a broken wrist (Ludlow, 2008).

Because of the dangers affiliated with working in these facilities, it is important that staff members maintain some form of respect for each other and practice teamwork. If this is not the case, more conflict is added to an already volatile environment. This dissension can be between his- or herself and the inmates or other staff members. In a juvenile detention facility where physical and verbal altercations are prevalent, it is vital that staff members trust and support one another. In the event of a physical altercation, JCOs must depend on each other to back each other up. Without this trust, chaos ensues because staff members take on an “every man for himself” attitude and no one works together. Thus, teamwork is crucial among juvenile correctional officers.

Research Questions and Goal

Because of the aforementioned issues, the goal of this research study is to produce a list of characteristics that enable a juvenile correctional officer to be successful. This list would eventually be utilized in the future by juvenile detention administrators and supervisors in order to retain staff members that can benefit and contribute to a successful juvenile detention facility. Additionally, these characteristics can also be used when determining potential training exercises and programs for JCOs.

The research questions for this study are:

- Can a list of characteristics of a successful juvenile correctional officer be ascertained?
- Is experience or education valued more in juvenile correctional officers?
Does the age, sex, or years of experience affect the opinions of juvenile detention center supervisors in regards to what qualities they value in their juvenile correctional officers?

Summary

This chapter has reviewed several key areas of literature important to this research project. First, the field of corrections and its history is reviewed to explain how our current system has developed. Next, the history of the juvenile justice system is reviewed. The underlying doctrine of *parens patriae*, important court cases and other legislative advancements, and society’s influence on the juvenile justice system are discussed. Next in this chapter is an overview of some of the negative consequences of employing unsuccessful juvenile correctional officers. These consequences include high turnover rates, compromised efficiency and efficacy, corruptions, and compromised security. The final area of literature reviewed in this chapter pertained to reasons in which a juvenile correctional officer leaves the employment of a detention center. The reasons discussed were better employment opportunities, inadequate salary levels, burnout, and termination. The final section of this chapter discussed the research questions and goal of this project.

Next Chapter

The next chapter discusses the methodology of this research project. The first section discusses the research design of this project. This includes the research instrument, the dependant and independent variables, and the definition of success utilized in this project. The research goal and questions of this research are then
reviewed. Also discussed in Chapter Three is data collection. This will include how research subjects were chosen and the steps taken in order to retrieve accurate and helpful information as possible. We will then discuss the survey instrument itself.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

While there is a plethora of information available on the general topic of correctional officers, little of this data is focused on juvenile correctional officers. It would be inappropriate to apply all information on adult correctional officers to those officers working with juveniles. Juvenile justice has different philosophies and operational strategies than the criminal justice system. Furthermore, much of the available data on correctional officers focuses on the negative aspects of the job. There is little information on what characteristics have aided those correctional officers to be successful in their position. This research project was designed to increase the knowledge concerning juvenile correctional officers.

Research Design

This research project utilized a survey design in order to collect needed data (See Appendix A). It was divided into three sections which will be discussed further later in this chapter. The primary goal of this project was to gather the opinions of all juvenile detention center supervisors in Ohio regarding which characteristics constitute a successful juvenile correctional officer. Success was defined as an employee who follows detention center rules, is dependable, treats the residents in a “firm, fair, and consistent” manner, gets along well with other staff members, does not abuse his or her vacation or sick time, and contributes to the success of the overall facility. The dependant variable in this study is success. The independent variables in this study are
the individual characteristics of the juvenile correctional officers. Once the data were collected, the results were reviewed and analyzed to determine which characteristics were considered by juvenile detention center supervisors to be important qualities in their correctional staff.

Research Questions and Goal

This study was descriptive in nature. It illustrated the opinions of the juvenile detention center supervisors in Ohio regarding their juvenile correctional staff. The goal of this research study was to produce a list of characteristics of successful juvenile correctional officers. This list could be utilized in a variety of ways. First, the list can be utilized by juvenile detention center supervisors throughout the hiring process. They could evaluate these qualities when interviewing potential employees to determine how closely the candidates meet these qualities. Based on this research, detention supervisors or counselors could develop a personality test or questionnaire for potential hires. Such standardized tools would be helpful to supervisors as they attempt to find those individuals having the necessary characteristics to withstand the rigors of being a juvenile correctional officer. Second, a list of characteristics of successful juvenile correctional officers could guide juvenile detention center supervisors and/or other officials when determining training curriculum for juvenile correctional officers.

The research questions for this study are:

- Can a list of characteristics of a successful juvenile correctional officer be ascertained?
- Is experience or education valued more in juvenile correctional officers?
• Does age, gender, or years of experience affect the opinions of juvenile detention center supervisors in regards to what qualities they value in their juvenile correctional officers?

_Data Collection_

In order to ascertain the needed information pertaining to successful juvenile correctional officers, opinions of all the juvenile detention center supervisors in Ohio were sought (See Appendix A). Only those supervisors who managed a county-run facility were chosen. State-run facilities were omitted because they are more comparable to adult prisons. County- or city-run juvenile detention centers, which were the target of this study, are more comparable to adult jails. The list of facilities utilized was found at the Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS) website: [http://www.dys.ohio.gov](http://www.dys.ohio.gov) (Ohio Department of Corrections, 2007, p. 9). Included in the packet they received were a cover letter, the survey instrument, and a self-addressed, pre-posted envelope for them to return their completed survey. This envelope was without a return address in order to ensure anonymity. In order to maximize the response rate, an electronic copy of the survey was sent to each supervisor who provided an e-mail address on the ODYS website. Forty surveys were sent via the U.S. Postal Service and 53 electronic copies were sent approximately two weeks later. Some facilities provided multiple e-mail addresses. In these instances, a survey was sent to each address. A total of 27 surveys were returned.

The cover letter (see Appendix B) included in the packet explained the research project to the detention supervisors. It first acknowledged the problems they most likely encounter on a regular basis regarding their juvenile correctional officers. It then reviewed the goal of this research project: to comprise a list of characteristics in juvenile
correctional officers that aid them in being successful at their job. The definition of “successful” was provided to offer the supervisors clarity. The letter also included the research design of the project. It outlined all steps taken by the researchers including to whom the surveys were being sent and in what forms (a hard copy as well as an electronic copy if possible). A final return date was also provided to ensure that the surveys were returned in a timely manner in order to maximize the reliability of the data collected. The letter also explained the research project’s promise of anonymity. No names of either the supervisors or the centers were to be used at any time throughout the study. The return envelopes provided intentionally omitted the return address of the facilities. Also, no mention would be made regarding which facilities or supervisors opted not to complete and return the survey. Finally, the cover letter thanked all of the supervisors who participated. Without their participation, this research project would be futile and inapplicable.

This survey asked a variety of questions that were divided into three categories. The first section included questions regarding the supervisors’ opinions on what characteristics constitute a successful juvenile correctional officer. The questions in the second section were regarding characteristics of the individual supervisor completing the survey. The questions in the third and final section pertained to the facility itself (see Appendix A). In the first section, a list of individual characteristics was developed based on a literature review as a result of several discussions with juvenile detention center supervisors and assistant supervisors regarding juvenile correctional officers. The supervisors being surveyed were then asked to rank these characteristics according to
which they found them to be (1) most important to (16) least important. These characteristics were:

- Teamwork / Loyalty to Co-workers
- Computer Skills
- Loyalty (to the Facility)
- Independent / Self-sufficient
- Empathetic
- Education
- Attendance / Promptness
- Professionalism
- Appearance
- Experience
- Strength / Physical Ability
- Gender
- Anger Management
- Coping Skills / Stress Management
- Age
- Other____________________

Additional questions were asked in order to expand on a few of the attributes. These pertained to the education levels of the juvenile correctional officers and other job requirements. The survey also inquired about what were the biggest disciplinary issues that the directors faced. These questions included:

- What is the minimum education one must obtain to be hired as a juvenile line officer at your facility?
- What is the average education level of your juvenile correctional officers?
- What other requirements must one pass in order to be hired as a juvenile correctional officer at your facility? (Examples included: drug screen, background check, physical agility test, satisfactory driving record, medical clearance)
- What experience, if any, is required in order to be hired as a juvenile line officer at your facility?
• Which quality in a juvenile correctional officer do you, as a juvenile detention center supervisor, value higher than the other: education or experience? Why?

The survey instrument also asked about the responder’s own age, education, gender, and length of employment as a supervisor. These questions were asked so that comparative statistics could be calculated. This information was utilized to investigate whether there was any relationship between these characteristics and the characteristics they valued in their juvenile correctional officers. Additionally, these questions were posed in relation the each supervisor’s background with the facility and his or her juvenile correctional staff:

• What was your position prior to being hired as the juvenile detention center supervisor?

• Have any of the juvenile correctional officers been employed at the facility longer than you have?

• Based on your success, what do you believe makes a successful juvenile correctional officer?

Finally, the survey instrument had questions regarding the juvenile detention facility itself. The following questions were asked in order to determine the size and population of the institution:

• How many juvenile correctional officers are employed at your facility?

• What is the average population of your facility?

• What is the most common charge of the residents housed in your facility?

• What is the approximate staff-to-resident ratio at your facility?
This research project was developed to establish a list of personal characteristics of juvenile correctional officers that contribute to their success at their jobs. It utilizes the survey design to collect data. The surveys were sent both via standard mail and e-mail to all forty juvenile detention center supervisors in Ohio. A total of 27 surveys were completed, returned, and received for analysis. The survey was broken down into three sections. The first included questions regarding the opinions of the supervisors on what characteristics constitute a successful juvenile correctional officer. The second section contained questions about the individual supervisor. The final section was comprised of questions pertaining to the facility itself. Chapter Four contains the analysis and findings of this research project. The research questions posed in this chapter are discussed as well as the results of the statistical and comparative analysis of the collected data.
CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis and Findings

Ohio’s Juvenile Detention Facilities

This study looked at the characteristics of juvenile correctional officers working in secure detention facilities in Ohio. The detention centers targeted by this research were county-run and generally only housed juveniles for a short length of time. They are similar to adult jails. A total of 40 facilities were surveyed. Twenty-seven (67.5%) responses were received. Larger facilities, not unlike adult prisons which are designed for long-time commitment of serious offenders, were not studied in this research.

Ohio’s juvenile justice system is a Home Rule system. This means that the cities and counties throughout the State function with a great deal of autonomy (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998). Thus, juvenile justice services, which are branches of either Probate Courts or the Domestic Relations Division of the Court of Common Pleas, are provided by local governments. Nine additional counties have separate Juvenile Divisions of the Court of Common Pleas (Office of Criminal Justice Services, 1997, p. 7). According to the Center for Family and Demographic Research, there were roughly 987,000 youth within the ages of 12 to 17 in Ohio in 2006 (2006). The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2007) reported the following statistics on juvenile crime within Ohio based on a 60% reporting coverage: 150 arrests for violent crimes; 1,001 arrests for property crimes; 414 arrests for drug abuse; and 70 arrests for weapons charges.
Based on the 27 surveys received as part of this research project, the average population of the juvenile detention facilities in Ohio is approximately 43.59 with a range of 10 to 175. The average number of juvenile correctional officers employed at these facilities is 35.54 with a range of 13 to 120. The approximate staff-to-resident ratio at these facilities was eight to one. Calculating the range, the lowest staff-to-resident ratio found was three to one and the maximum was 12 to one.

General guidelines do exist to aid personnel in determining whether or not to accept or deter a juvenile for detention. Under law, the primary function of juvenile detention centers is to hold a juvenile while they await adjudication. Under most codes, any juvenile who is being charged with a criminal or delinquent offense can be detained as long as the minimum age requirement is satisfied and a reason exists to believe (a) detention is in the best interest of the youth, (b) detention of the youth will protect society, or (c) the youth will not appear for the court hearing if released (Roush, 1996, p. 27). Many of these guidelines prohibit the detainment of status offenders or other nondelinquent minors. These are offenses which would not be criminal if they had been committed by an adult (Roush, 1996p. 71). Examples of status offenses include runaway, truancy, or curfew violation.

Since the detained population consists of juveniles, extra care must be exercised when hiring correctional staff. Individuals who have the proper training and who accept the philosophy of the juvenile justice system should be employed. This is important so that discretion is not abused. One example that highlights the importance of employing the best possible juvenile correctional officers is the decision to intake a juvenile. This should be the responsibility of experienced and well-trained individuals. There are
serious consequences involved for the affected youth and their families. One of the goals of the juvenile justice system is to keep juveniles out from under its supervision; therefore, the decision to detain a juvenile should not be made lightly.

Current Study

The goal of this study was to determine the attributes that contribute to the success of a juvenile correctional officer. Forty juvenile detention center supervisors were surveyed in order to gain their opinions on the subject. Twenty-seven surveys were returned for a response rate of 67.5 percent. To better organize the results of this study, the chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Section One discusses the personal characteristics of JCOs that were ranked in order of importance by the juvenile detention center supervisors.
- Section Two contains the results on problems and disciplinary issues among JCOs.
- Section Three discusses the results on whether Education or Experiences is valued more in JCOs.
- Section Four discusses the differences in opinions among the supervisors based on the following attributes: a) age, b) gender, c) education, and d) years of service.

Section One—Personal Characteristics

As previously stated, surveys were sent out to each of the 40 juvenile detention centers in Ohio. Of the 27 surveys received, one document was unusable for this section due to an error in completion. Thus, this section’s result are based on 26 surveys with a response rate of 65 percent. The survey provided 16 personal characteristics of JCOs for the supervisors to rank in order of importance based on their own experience. Based on
their mean ranking, they are in order in which they were found to be most valued in a juvenile correctional officers:

1. Professionalism
2. Teamwork
3. Attendance / Promptness
4. Anger Management
5. Loyalty
6. Empathy
7. Experience
8. Independence / Self-Sufficiency
9. Stress Management
10. Education
11. Appearance
12. Strength / Physical Ability
13. Computer Skills
14. Other ________________
15. Age
16. Sex

Respondents were given the option of including additional characteristics next to the “other option. Of the 27 surveys completed and analyzed, 11 of them included additional traits. The most frequent characteristic listed was common sense (n=3, 27.3%). Other characteristics listed included leadership, ethics, time management, a desire to make a difference, decision making, honesty, positive attitude, conflict resolution, and creativity/imagination.

Section Two—Disciplinary Issues and Problems

Respondents were asked to name the biggest problems or disciplinary issues they face as detention center supervisors regarding their juvenile correctional officers. They identified 32 problems total. Attendance, tardiness/punctuality, and abuse of sick time were by far the most common problems identified (n=16, 59%). The second most common disciplinary problem they identified was failure to follow the policies and
problems of the facility (n=5, 19%). Other problems identified included: a lack of
team concept (n=1, 4%), not always using good judgment (n=1, 4%), missing
documentation (n=1, 4%), a lack of work ethic (n=1, 4%), gossip among staff (n=1, 4%),
minor rule infractions (n=1, 4%), missing routine scheduled checks (n=1, 4%), not taking
the time to listen to what the youth have to say (n=1, 4%), overtime coverage,
professionalism (n=1, 4%), understanding boundaries (n=1, 4%), and not always utilizing
common sense (n=1, 4%) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Disciplinary Issues and Problems

- Attendance & Tardiness
- Failure to follow Policy & Procedures
- Lack of Team Concept
- Not always using good judgment
- Missing documentation
- Lack of work ethic
- Gossip among staff / shifts
- Minor rule infractions
- Missing routine scheduled checks
- Not taking the time to listen to what youth have to say
- Overtime coverage
- Professionalism
- Understanding Boundaries
- Not always utilizing common sense
Section Three—Education vs. Experience

As we discussed in Chapter 2, employing new and untrained correctional officers can be dangerous for juvenile detention center supervisors. Safety is of the utmost importance at these facilities and that safety is compromised when JCOs are unsure or apprehensive about policies and procedures. Thus, it is important that JCOs are experienced so that there is no breach in security. However, education has always been a valued characteristic in juvenile correctional officers as well. Many believe that correctional officers with higher levels of education are more likely to embrace the rehabilitative and treatment goals of corrections (Robinson, Porporino, & Simourd, 1997, p. 61). These two ideologies are the cornerstones of the juvenile justice system and are, thus, inherent guidelines throughout juvenile corrections. However, while there is some support for this view, some studies also suggest that education may reduce identification with the custodial role of the correctional officer (Poole & Regoli, 1980).

In order to examine whether education or experience was valued more in juvenile correctional officers, the survey instrument utilized in this research posed the following question to the juvenile detention center supervisors:

- As a juvenile detention center supervisor, which do you value higher than the other when hiring for the position of juvenile correctional officer: Education or Experience?

- Why that particular attribute?

Analysis showed that experience was valued higher (n=19, 70%). Education was preferred over experience far less (n=6, 22%). Of the 27 surveys received, two respondents answered that they valued these characteristics equally (n=2, 8%) (See Figure 2).
The juvenile detention center supervisors were also asked about what, if any, were the requirements one must possess in order to be hired as a juvenile correctional officer in his or her facility (See Figure 3). Their responses indicated that a majority of facilities require only a high school diploma or GED equivalent (n=23, 85.2%). A small percentage of the facilities require that an individual obtain a bachelors degree in order to be hired as a JCO (n=3, 11.1%) while very few require an associates or 2-year degree (n=1, 3.7%).
While these are the minimum requirements, respondents indicated that a majority of their juvenile correctional officers have an associates or 2-year degree (n=17, 63%). The second most common education level of their JCOs is a high school diploma or GED (n=6, 22.2%). The fewest JCOs possess a bachelors degree (n=4, 14.8%) (See Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Average Education Levels of JCOs](image)

Supervisors were also asked why they valued that particular attribute over the other. Of the two respondents who stated that they valued both characteristics equally, one supervisor noted that presentation of the qualities would be the deciding factor for hiring. Of the six respondents who stated they valued education over experience, five provided these reasons:

- While both are very valuable to a facility, I feel that having an education should be a pre-requisite for any employment. A higher education shows an employer that the person is willing to do what is necessary to succeed in life. Once the education is completed, the person goes on to be both educated and experienced which is the ultimate value when hiring for any position.
- The education shows a commitment and discipline to achieve an advanced degree.
- Experience at other facilities may be negative.
- Shows the ability to learn. No bad habits (acquired from other facilities).
- I prefer an intelligent individual I can train.
Of respondents who stated they valued experience over education, some cited the following reasons:

- Education can be bought while experience is learned.
- Smoother transition into the program.
- Common sense and maturity from life skills goes a long way.
- Shows the person has worked (hands on) with youth.
- Already familiar with job details.
- I feel they are both important but if someone has done the job before they know what they are getting into.
- Hands-on experience is more beneficial. 2 years of experience can equal 1 year of education.
- Hands-on training is more valuable.
- Life lessons dealing with this population is more valuable than anything else.
- You can’t buy experience or train it.
- Education cannot make up for a lack of common sense.
- All the education in the world will not prepare you if you have no experience working with youth.
- We prefer to hire staff who is familiar with the delinquent population we serve.
- Because not much of what you learn in college relations to this job.
- (Because of the) qualities and background brought to the team.
- Staff would know that ensuring safety, security, welfare, and caring of youth is extremely important.
- Whether you have an education or not, it takes good common sense.
- Because of life and dealing with juveniles; books will not teach experience.

Respondents were also asked if any experience was required of their juvenile correctional officers prior to employment (See Figure 5). Of the 27 surveys received, two
left this answer blank. Thus, the following statistics are based on a response rate of 25.

Many stated that no experience was required (n=13, 52%). However, of these supervisors who stated that experience was not necessary, most also acknowledged that it was preferred and/or credit was given to those individuals who did possess some experience (n=6, 46%). Few respondents admitted that experience is preferred or appreciated (n=2, 8%) while others noted that experience was necessary (n=7, 28%). Furthermore, some respondents acknowledged that experience was necessary but that this experience was related to academics and not working with youth (n=3, 12%).

![Figure 5: Required Experience of JCOs](image)

Finally, respondents were also asked whether there were any additional requirements for which their juvenile correctional officers must meet (See Figure 6). A majority of respondents acknowledged that an individual must pass a drug screen in order to be employed at his or her facility as a juvenile correctional officer (n=23, 85.2%). Another requirement of JCOs that was asked about was a background check. Every respondent
answered that an individual must satisfactorily pass a background check in order to be considered for employment at his or her juvenile detention facility (n=27, 100%). It was rare that a facility required an individual pass a physical agility test (n=1, 3.7%) but medical clearance (n=15, 55.6%) and a satisfactory driving record (n=18, 66.7%) were more common. Furthermore, some respondents indicated additional requirements for their juvenile correctional officers (n=6, 22.2%). These additional requirements included:

- Psychological evaluation (n=2, 7.4%)
- Children Services check (n=1, 3.7%)
- Impact test (n=1, 3.7%)
- MMPI (n=1, 3.7%)
- Reference letters (n=1, 3.7%)
- Age requirement of 21 years or older (n=1, 3.7%)
- Complete basic training requirements (160 hours) (n=1, 3.7%)

Figure 6: Additional Requirements of JCOs
The respondents in this research study were juvenile detention center supervisors, administrators, or individuals responsible for the supervision of juvenile correctional officers within a particular facility. All facilities in Ohio were sent a copy of the survey instrument as well as an electronic copy. Of those 40 facilities, 27 responded. These respondents varied in (a) age, (b) gender, (c) education level, and (d) length of employment. Based on these differences, data was analyzed in order to determine if there were any patterns among their answers and opinions.

A majority of the respondents were male (n=20, 74.1%). Their ages ranged from 29 to 60 years old. For the purposes of this study, the ages of the respondents have been regrouped and examined in decades. The most common education level of the respondents was a bachelors degree (n=16, 59.3%). Other education levels included: a high school diploma or GED (n=3, 11.1%); an associates or 2-year degree (n=2, 7.4%); and a masters degree (n=6, 22.2%). The length of time served as juvenile detention center supervisor also varied among the respondents. This length of time varied from 1 to 24 years.

**AGE**

As states earlier, the ages of the respondents were regrouped according to decades—i.e. 20s (n=1, 3.7%), 30s (n=6, 22.2%), 40s (n=8, 29.6%), 50s (n=11, 40.7%), and 60s (n=1, 3.7%)—and then examined. Only one pattern among their answers could be determined. Results show that those supervisors in their 30s are most likely to rate professionalism as the most important variable or characteristic in a juvenile correctional officer. The respondent in his/her 20s rated professionalism third (n=1, 100%), those in their 40s were
more likely to rate it second (n=4, 57.1%), and those in their 50s were most likely to rate it either first (n=4, 36.4%) or second (n=3, 27.3%). These differences were statistically different.

GENDER

The gender of the respondents was analyzed in relation to their answers. As stated earlier, there were more men (n=20, 74%) than women (n=7, 25.9%) respondents. Few differences among their answers were found. However, one that was noticeable related to the characteristic of “professionalism” in juvenile correctional officers. Men were more likely than women to rate professionalism as the most important characteristic in a juvenile correctional officer (χ=12.7, df=6, p<.05). Women were more likely to rate professionalism as the second or sixth most important variable. They were also more likely to rate attendance/promptness as the most important characteristic in a juvenile correctional officer (n=3, 42.8%).

The other noticeable difference found in the answers of the men versus the women was regarding “empathy.” Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to rate empathy either 2, 3, or 4 (none rated it as the most important characteristic) (χ=20.07, df=11, p≤.05). Women were more likely to rate empathy the fifth most important characteristic among juvenile correctional officers (n=3, 42.8%).

EDUCATION LEVEL
This study also analyzed the answers of the respondents based on their education levels in order to determine whether or not any pattern could be determined. As stated earlier, the education levels of the respondents included a high school diploma or GED (n=3, 11.1%), a bachelors degree (n=16, 59.3%), an associates or 2-year degree (n=2, 7.4%), and a masters degree (n=6, 22.2%) (see Figure 7). After analysis, no significant differences or patterns could be determined among their answers.

![Figure 7: Education Level of Respondents](image)

LENGTH OF EMPLOYMENT

The respondents’ answers were also analyzed according to their length of employment as a juvenile detention center supervisor. This was done in order to determine whether or not a pattern could be detected among their answers. One respondent left this answer blank, thus analyses for this section is based on 26 surveys and a response rate of 65%. As previously mentioned, the length of time served as detention center supervisor by the respondents ranged from one to 24 years. They were
regrouped according to decades—i.e. 1-10 years (n=13), 11-20 years (n=10), and 21+ years (n=3)—and then analyzed (See Figures). However, no differences or patterns could be determined among their answers.

**Figure 8: Length of Service of Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-10 years</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the analytical findings of this research study based on the data collected utilizing a survey instrument. While 40 detention centers had originally been sent surveys, 27 were returned for a response rate of 67.5%. This chapter was further organized into the following four sections in which to review the data: (1) personal characteristics, (2) disciplinary problems and issues, (3) education vs. experience, and (4) characteristics among the detention center supervisors.

The first section provided the ranking order of preferred characteristics among juvenile correctional officers as provided by the supervisors completing the surveys. The second section reviewed the biggest disciplinary issues and problems the supervisors
found among their juvenile correctional officers. Attendance, tardiness, and promptness were the leading problems noted by the respondents. The third section discussed education vs. experience and whether supervisors valued one trait higher among their juvenile correctional officers. The data showed that experience was often valued higher than education. This section further reviews the following data: (a) why supervisors valued a experience over education or vice versa; (b) the average education level of the juvenile correctional officers under the respondents’ supervision; (c) the minimum educational requirements of the detention facility supervised by the respondents; (d) if each facility required any previous experience in order for an individual to be hired as a juvenile correctional officer, and (e) whether each facility required a drug screen, a background check, a physical agility test, medical clearance, a driving record check, or any other additional requirements from their juvenile correctional officers. The fourth and final section of this chapter reviewed the results of the surveys based on respondents’ gender, age, education, and length of employment in order to determine if any patterns could be determined. While a few minor differences could be found among age and gender, none could be determined among education and length of employment.

Next Chapter

The fifth and final chapter, which is organized into four major sections, presents the conclusions of this research study. The first section provides a summary of all the major findings of this study. The second section discusses any and all limitations of this research study. The third section presents suggestions on how to improve this research
The fourth section has recommendations for future researchers pertaining to the topics discussed in this research study.
While there has been a lot of research pertaining to correctional officers, there have been few studies focused on those officers that work with the juvenile population. Because of the differences in ideals between the two systems, the responsibilities of the front line officers will also vary. An individual’s personal characteristics will affect how he or she will perform these responsibilities. The youth being detained in detention facilities are highly impressionable due to their age and immaturity. Their actions are often the result of familial and societal influences. Because they will someday be released back into society, it is important for the juvenile justice system and the personnel involved, especially the front line officers supervising them, attempt to correct their dysfunctional or delinquent behaviors.

The goal of this research project is to see if it is possible to determine a set of common characteristics found among successful juvenile correctional officers (JCOs) in order to help guide juvenile detention center supervisors as they interview, hire, and train JCOs for their facilities. Again, this study was not a task analysis of juvenile correctional officers in Ohio and is not meant to document hiring criteria per se. The findings, however, do suggest issues and personal characteristics that could be part of background investigations and/or training programs. Survey packets were sent to each of the 40 juvenile detention center supervisors in Ohio. Of these 40, 27 were returned for a response rate of 67.5%. The survey instrument utilized included questions regarding important personal characteristics, disciplinary issues and problems, and whether they
valued education or experience higher among their juvenile correctional officers. Informational questions were also included that pertained to the supervisors themselves and their facilities. This data was utilized to determine any trends among their answers. All analyses and findings were presented in the previous chapter.

This final chapter is divided into the following sections in order to present the conclusions drawn:

- Major Findings
- Contributions to the Discipline
- Limitations of the Research
- Recommendations for Future Research

**Major Findings**

The survey instrument utilized in this research project provided 16 personal characteristics for respondents to rank in accordance to their preferences among their juvenile correctional officers. The final rankings were as follows:

1. Professionalism
2. Teamwork
3. Attendance / Promptness
4. Anger Management
5. Loyalty
6. Empathy
7. Experience
8. Independence / Self-Sufficiency
9. Stress Management
10. Education
11. Appearance
12. Strength / Physical Ability
13. Computer Skills
14. Other _____________
15. Age
16. Sex
The most common “other” trait provided was common sense (n=3, 27%).

Based on an analysis of the ages of the supervisors, one pattern could be determined. Supervisors in their 30s were most likely to rate professionalism the most important characteristic among juvenile correctional officers. However, this variable was considered important by all age groups as the supervisors in his/her 20s ranked it third (n=1, 100%), those in their 40s ranked in second (n=4, 57.1%), and those in their 50s ranked it either first (n=4, 36.4%) or second (n=3, 27.3%).

This project also analyzed the answers of the supervisors based on their gender. There were two notable differences. The first pertained to the importance of professionalism in juvenile correctional officers. Men were more likely than women to rank professionalism first as the most important characteristic in a JCO; women were most likely to rank it second. Instead, they ranked attendance/promptness as the most important characteristic among juvenile correctional officers. The second notable difference was with the characteristic empathy. Male supervisors placed more value on empathy than their female counterparts.

The educational levels of the supervisors as well as their length of employment were two additional characteristics that were analyzed in relation to their answers. Their education levels ranged from a high school diploma (or GED equivalent) to a masters degree. Their years of employment as a supervisor ranked from one to 24 years. No differences or patterns could be detected among their answers based on either of these two variables.

The most common disciplinary problem or issue identified by the respondents was attendance, tardiness/promptness, and/or abuse of sick time. The second most
common was failure to follow the policies and procedures of the facility. Additional problems that were acknowledged included:

- Lack of team concept or an “all about me” attitude
- Not always utilizing good judgment or common sense
- Missing documentation
- Lack of work ethic
- Gossip among staff, minor rule infractions
- Missing routine scheduled checks
- Not taking the time to listen to what the youth have to say
- Overtime coverage
- Professionalism,
- Understanding boundaries.

A majority of the respondents acknowledged that they valued experience over education in their juvenile correctional officers. Each supervisor was asked to explain their preference. Of those who preferred education, the most common explanation was that an educated individual is one who displays a commitment or willingness to do what is necessary to succeed and that experience and training will soon come. While the minimum educational requirement for most of the juvenile detention centers surveyed in this study was a high school diploma, the average juvenile correctional officer employed at these facilities was an associates or equivalent 2-year degree. Of those individuals who preferred experience, the most common reason was that an experienced individual already knows the specifics of the job including the special circumstances of working with youth as well a secure environment. Thus, their transition to a new facility will be
easier and hopefully result in fewer problems. While it is clearly valued higher than education, few facilities require an individual to have experience when being considered for employment as a juvenile correctional.

Based on this data, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, professionalism is one of, if not the most, important characteristic of a successful juvenile correctional officer. Second, attendance is the biggest problem found among this particular group. This includes promptness, tardiness, and abuse of sick time. Third, while no differences could be detected among the respondents’ opinions and their education level or length of employment, a slight pattern is noticeable with regards to their ages and gender. While different age groups ranked professionalism higher than others, it was still valued highly by all respondents. Most ranked it in their top three most valued characteristics among juvenile correctional officers. Also, men are more likely than women to rank empathy higher as a valued characteristic among juvenile correctional officers. The fourth and final conclusion drawn from this research is that experience is overwhelmingly valued over education by juvenile detention supervisors in regards to their juvenile correctional officers.

Contributions

This research project contributes to juvenile justice in two ways. First, it highlights the differences juvenile correctional officers face as opposed to those working with adults. They must adhere to the ideals of the juvenile justice system. Aside from protecting society, which is also the goal of the adult criminal justice system, the juvenile system acknowledges the naïve and immature nature of its clients. Because it recognizes
delinquency as a societal problem as opposed to the behaviors of a “bad” or “evil” child, the juvenile justice system aims to rehabilitate youth instead of punish them. Juvenile correctional officers must embrace these ideals. Although they must supervise and discipline detained youth, they need to infuse kindness, understanding, and compassion into their conduct as well.

Second, this project provides a list of personal characteristics considered to be important by juvenile detention center supervisors throughout the state of Ohio. This list can be utilized in two ways. First, supervisors can refer to it for training purposes. When a supervisor is determining which trainings should be provided to their juvenile correctional officers, the conclusions from this study will highlight important areas on which they can focus.

The second means by which supervisors can utilize this list of commonly valued characteristics of successful juvenile correctional officers is as a guide when interviewing potential hires. Because of the problems associated with employing unsuccessful juvenile correctional officers that were discussed in Chapter 2, supervisors will be able to utilize the characteristics found by this research to be valued in JCOs as a guide throughout their hiring process. Additionally, this list would be helpful to an individual intent on developing a personality test throughout the selection of entry-level juvenile correctional officers. Similar to the preemployment examination utilized by California, such a test could be given to individuals applying for such a position in order to evaluate these personal characteristics.
Limitations of the Research

There were several limitations to this study. The first problem acknowledged by is that miscommunication between the researcher and the respondent is possible. Two examples follow to further explain. The first area pertains to the personal characteristics being ranked by the supervisors. In retrospect, the variables being ranked could have been further defined so that the respondent was aware of what was meant by the researcher. This was exemplified by one respondent who pointed out that some of the characteristics were ill-defined.

It is also possible for the researcher to misinterpret the answers provided by the supervisors. For instance, respondents were encouraged to provide written answers for some of the questions. When analyzing the data, researcher interpreted the data before analyzing it. It is possible that such data was misinterpreted. For example, supervisors were asked whether or not experience was a requirement to be hired as a juvenile correctional officer. Some respondents answered simply stated “yes” or “no.” Others admitted that experience was preferred or even provided different situations in which experience would be necessary. Thus, researcher had to interpret the data before it could be analyzed. It is possible meanings were distorted during this interpretation.

A second limitation of this study was that some answers were not included from respondents to be evaluated. For instance, although there was an option for respondents to include an additional characteristic, it is possible that additional characteristics exist that would contribute to a juvenile correctional officer’s success that were omitted from this survey. Also, when questioned whether they valued education or experience more, respondents were not given the option to choose both. Two respondents noted that both
traits were valued equally. In other words, the survey instrument provided hoped to maximize feedback and minimize misinterpretation of the data but may also have led respondents to provide unoriginal or influenced data.

A third limitation of this research relates to the validity of the information received. Although researchers stressed anonymity as well as the importance of providing accurate information, it is possible that respondents provided inaccurate feedback for a variety of reasons. An example would include the answers given for the average staff-to-resident ratio. Not a single respondent reported having a higher ratio than 12 to one. This may be accurate, but might have been influenced by the state mandate of one to 12. This phenomenon, known as the Hawthorne effect, means that individuals report information they believe the researcher is looking for or wants to see.

**Future Research**

In addition to addressing the limitations mentioned in the previous section, here are a few other considerations for future research. First, researchers should study successful juvenile correctional officers on a national level. Thus, any biases and/or trends associated with supervisors in Ohio would be eliminated. Also, this would help the findings to be applicable to all juvenile detention centers throughout the country.

Future researchers may also want to utilize alternative methods to gather information. Interviewing a supervisor would allow each individual to clarify or explain any misunderstandings or misconceptions to ensure more accurate communication. Also, future researchers may consider gathering data from juvenile correctional officers. Their
opinions and feedback would offer additional relevant information regarding positive and negative characteristics of their coworkers.

Summary

Chapter 5 reviewed the important role of juvenile correctional officers within our juvenile justice system. Because few studies have been conducted on what makes these individuals successful, this study aimed to produce such a list of personal characteristics that are considered to be most valuable by juvenile detention center supervisors. This chapter was organized into four major sections in order to review the major findings, contributions, limitations, and recommendations of this research project.

The major findings of this research project show professionalism, teamwork, and attendance/promptness are considered to be the most important factors of successful juvenile correctional officers. Additionally, experience is valued higher over education. Few variations were found among supervisors’ answers based on their age, gender, education levels, and length of employment. This research can be utilized by juvenile detention center supervisors throughout both the hiring and training processes of the correctional officers. Limitations of this project and suggestions for future researchers are provided in order to aid in future endeavors to gain additional relevant knowledge on these individuals who continue to provide direct care to the highly impressionable and misguided youth within our juvenile justice system.
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Schall v. Martin, 467 U.S. 253 (U.S. Supreme Court June 4, 1984).


Appendix A

Survey Instrument
Appendix A

Survey Instrument

The information obtained from this questionnaire will be used in order for the researcher, Jessica Mangan, to complete her thesis work at Youngtown State University. Your participation will require approximately 20 minutes. The information that you provide the researcher will remain confidential; results will only be discussed in the aggregate.

I. Please answer these questions regarding juvenile correctional officers.

A. Please rate these characteristics in order of importance, (1) being the most important trait and (16) being the least important trait that leads to a juvenile corrections officer’s success.

— Teamwork  — Appearance
— Computer Skills  — Experience
— Loyalty  — Strength / Physical Ability
— Independence / Self-Sufficiency  — Gender
— Empathetic  — Age
— Education  — Anger Management
— Attendance / Promptness  — Stress Management
— Professionalism  — Other__________
B. What is the biggest problem/disciplinary issue you see with your juvenile correctional officers?___________________________________________

C. What is the minimum education one must obtain to be hired as a juvenile line officer at your facility? Please check answer.

☐ No education requirement ☐ Associates or 2 year degree

☐ High School diploma or ☐ Bachelors degree

    GED

D. What is the average education level of your juvenile corrections officers?

☐ No education requirement ☐ Associates or 2 year degree

☐ High School diploma or ☐ Bachelors degree

    GED

E. Must one pass any of the following for him or her to be hired as a juvenile line officer at your facility? Please check all that apply.

☐ Drug Screen

☐ Background Check

☐ Physical Agility Test

☐ Driving Record

☐ Medical Clearance

☐ Other_____________
F. What experience, if any, is required in order to be hired as a juvenile line officer at your facility? ______________________________________________________

G. As a juvenile detention center administrator, which do you value higher than the other when hiring for the position of juvenile line officer: Education or Experience? (circle one)

H. Why that particular attribute? ______________________________________________

II. Please answer these questions regarding yourself as an administrator of a juvenile detention center.

A. What is your education level? If you have a college degree, what field is it in?
   ______________________________________________________________________

B. What is your gender: Male or Female? (Circle one)

C. What is your age? _______________________________________________________

D. How many years have you served as a detention center supervisor, director, or superintendent? _______________________________________________________

E. What was your position prior to being hired as the juvenile detention center supervisor?
   ______________________________________________________________________

F. Have any of the juvenile correctional officers been employed at the facility longer than you have? _________________________________________________

G. Based on your success, what do you believe makes a successful juvenile corrections officer? ________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

III. Please answer these questions regarding your facility.

A. How many juvenile correctional officers are employed at your facility? ________
B. What is the average population of your facility? __________________________

C. What is the most common charge of the residents housed in your facility? ______
________________________________________________________________________

D. What is the approximate staff-to-resident ratio at your facility? ______________
Appendix B

Cover Letter
Dear (will insert the name of the supervisor),

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and inquire about the packet you have received. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. We hope that your generosity extends to completing and returning the included survey. As you will soon see, this will benefit not only the researchers involved, but yourself and your facility as well.

The survey you have received is part of a research study being conducted to determine the characteristics most valued in juvenile correctional officers. As you know, the unique and stressful components that are characteristic of this job often lead to high levels of burnout and turnover. Your own facility probably has seen the negative consequences of these problems. **Thus, the goal of this study is to determine what personal characteristics lead most often to a successful juvenile correctional officer.**

By “successful,” we mean an individual who is considered beneficial to his or her facility. He or she promotes positive interaction among the residents as well as the staff, does not abuse the benefits of the job, is loyal to the facility as well as his or her coworkers, is dependable, and has the ability to cope effectively with the stressors of the job. Those individuals who fail to do these things often contribute negatively to the overall environment of a facility and its effectiveness. In order to counteract these problems, the researchers involved in this study are seeking the opinions of all juvenile detention center supervisors in Ohio regarding the most valued personal qualities of their juvenile correctional officers considered to be the most beneficial and successful at their jobs.

Each supervisor should receive not only this packet by mail, but also an electronic copy so that either method can be utilized by the surveys. Should you receive both, complete and return whichever one you find most suitable for you. Please do so by November 6th. This study is completely confidential. **No names, including those of the facilities, will be used or published no matter which survey option you choose to return. Also, there will be no mention as to who chose to complete and return the survey and those who chose against it.**

Once the surveys have been returned to the researchers and the data examined, each supervisor will receive a copy of the research article which will include the results.

Thank you,

Jessica Mangan
Appendix C

Human Subjects Review Board

Approval Form
Appendix C

Human Subjects Review Board Approval Form

October 20, 2009

Dr. John Hazy, Principal Investigator
Ms. Jessica Mangan, Co-investigator
Department of Criminal Justice
UNIVERSITY

RE: HSRC Protocol Number: 46-2010
Title: Personal Characteristics that Lead to a Successful Juvenile Correctional Officer

Dear Dr. Hazy and Ms. Mangan:

The Human Subjects Research Committee has reviewed the abovementioned protocol and determined that it is exempt from full committee review based on a DHHS Category 2 exemption.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Human Subjects Research Committee and may not be initiated without HSRC approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the Human Subjects Research Committee.

The HSRC would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,

Peter J. Kasvinsky
Dean, School of Graduate Studies
Research Compliance Officer

PJK/cc

c: Dr. Patricia Wagner, Chair
Department of Criminal Justice