
ANNOTATION:

Design: In this recent work, the authors take a most important step toward attempting to discern what factors influence a youth’s propensity to reoffend or not. In 1996 the authors were able to locate and follow up some 108 young people (accounting for 67% of the original New Zealand sample) and 98 parents who had participated in family group conferencing in 1990-91. All the young people were in their twenties.

RECIDIVISM: The researchers identified 5 reconviction categories and self-reporting of offenses to measure recidivism.

-- Persistent reconvicted-characterized by the frequency and volume of their offending in criminal matters (28%)
-- Improving reconvicted- had offended persistently for a time but had not been reconvicted in the 12 months prior to the interviews (8%)
-- Occasional reconvicted - had appeared in court more than once but had committed less than 5 offenses (21%)
-- Once only reconvicted- had appeared in court only once (14%)
-- Not reconvicted. (29%)

Several multivariate analyses were conducted to sort out predictors of reconviction and pathways to reoffending. The researchers developed a model to predict reoffending based on early life experiences (deficits in the family’s circumstances and the child’s environment) and early negative experiences (experiencing bullying, violence and abuse).

Conclusion: The authors conclude “family group conferences can contribute to lessening the chance of reoffending even when other important factors such as adverse early experiences, other events which may be more related to chance, and subsequent life events are taken into account. Critical factors for young people are to have a conference that is memorable, not being made to feel a bad person, feeling involved in the conference decision-making, agreeing with the outcome, completing the tasks agreed to, feeling sorry for what they had done, meeting the victim and apologizing to him/her, and feeling that they had repaired the damage.” The authors point out “these factors reflect key restorative values, processes and outcomes.”

GROUP CONFERENCING
JUVENILE
MIXED CRIME TYPE
RECIDIVISM
OFFENDER
SURVEY, RECORD DATA
NEW ZEALAND