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Federal Probation

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This Issue in Brief

Guiding Philosophies for Probation in the 21st Century.—What does the future hold in store for probation? Authors Richard D. Sluder, Allen D. Sapp, and Denny C. Langston identify and discuss philosophies and goals that will emerge to guide probation in the 21st century. They predict that offender rehabilitation will become a dominant theme in probation but that it will be tempered by concern about controlling offenders to ensure community protection.

Identifying and Supervising Offenders Affiliated With Community Threat Groups.—Gangs and community threat groups have placed a new breed of offender under the supervision of U.S. probation officers. Are the officers adequately trained in special offender risk-management techniques to provide effective supervision? Author Victor A. Casillas analyzes gang and community threat group issues from a district perspective—that of the Western District of Texas. He defines and classifies community threat groups generally, relates the history of gangs in San Antonio, and recommends organizational strategies for identifying, tracking, and supervising offenders affiliated with community threat groups.

Community Service: A Good Idea That Works.—For more than a decade the community service program initiated by the probation office in the Northern District of Georgia has brought offenders and community together, often with dramatic positive results. Author Richard J. Maher presents several of the district's "success stories" and describes how the program has built a bridge of trust between offenders and the community, has provided valuable services to the community, and has saved millions of dollars in prison costs. He also notes that the "get tough on crime" movement threatens proven and effective community service programs and decreases the probability that new programs will be encouraged or accepted.

Community-Based Drug Treatment in the Federal Bureau of Prisons.—Author Sharon D. Stewart provides a brief overview of the history of substance abuse treatment in the Federal Bureau of Prisons and discusses residential treatment programming within Bureau institutions. She describes in detail the

community-based Transitional Services Program, including the relationship between the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the United States Probation System, and community treatment providers.

The Patch: A New Alternative for Drug Testing in the Criminal Justice System.—Authors James D. Baer and Jon Booher describe a new drug testing device—a patch which collects sweat for analysis. They present the results of a product evaluation study conducted in the U.S. probation and U.S. pretrial

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Up to Speed

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH FOR PRACTITIONERS

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Results of a Multisite Study of Boot Camp Prisons*

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BOOT CAMP prisons have been rapidly growing throughout the United States. The programs began in 1983 in Georgia and Oklahoma (MacKenzie, 1993). The focus of these early programs was on creating a military atmosphere with drill and ceremony, physical training, and hard labor. Later programs added rehabilitation components such as counseling, academic education, and drug education and treatment. Programs continued to grow, and 36 states had boot camps by 1994. Figure 1 shows the states that have boot camp prisons in state correctional systems for adults. Currently, they are also being developed for juveniles (Toby & Pearson, 1992) and in local jails (Austin et al., 1993). There is some literature discussing the development and implementation of these programs. As yet, however, little is really known about the goals of the programs and whether the boot camps are successful in achieving these goals.¹ This research was designed to describe a sample of the boot camps and to investigate whether the programs have been successful in achieving their goals.

Survey of State Correctional Systems

In 1990 we surveyed all 50 state correctional systems to determine the number and type of boot camp prisons then operating in the United States. At the

*The investigation described here was supported in part by Grant # 90-DD-CX-0061 to the University of Maryland from the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U. S. Department of Justice. Points of view in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U. S. Department of Justice. The author wishes to thank all who have worked on the multisite study.

time 14 states had programs. Eight of the states agreed to participate in a study evaluating the effectiveness of their boot camps: Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Texas. The study examined:

- The implementation and development of these programs;
- The attitude changes of offenders in the programs;
- The recidivism and positive adjustment of the offenders during community supervision; and
- The impact of the programs on prison crowding.

The eight sites were selected because they had the common core components of boot camp prisons (military drill and ceremony, physical training, strict discipline, and hard physical labor); however, the boot camps differed greatly in other aspects (MacKenzie, 1990). All of the programs were designed for youthful or adult felons. The following sections describe the findings from this multisite study.²

The Eight Boot Camp Programs³

The eight programs had fairly rigid eligibility criteria that placed restrictions on the type of offender considered acceptable for the program. Most of the programs targeted young offenders who were convicted of nonviolent crimes. Eligibility criteria also further restricted participation to offenders who did not have a serious criminal history. Programs differed substantially in rehabilitation focus, voluntariness, release supervision, and in who was responsible for entry decisionmaking (e.g., judge or department of corrections).

Florida's boot camp program held 100 offenders. Unlike offenders in many of the other programs, offenders in the Florida program were in cells, not in dormitories. On average, offenders spent 100 days in the program. A large number were dismissed (52 percent) before completing the program, and most of these

left due to discipline problems. Offenders did not volunteer for entry, nor could they voluntarily drop out. They spent a little less than 2 hours per day in counseling or educational programs, and most of this time was devoted to rational emotive therapy. Inmate participants were selected from prison-bound offenders. On the average, those who entered were 19 years old with 10 years of formal education, 56 percent were nonwhite, and they were serving time for burglary, theft, or drugs.

Georgia at the time of the study had two boot camp programs with a total capacity of 250 offenders. We examined one of the programs. Offenders had to volunteer for entry, but once they were in the program they could not ask to leave. They remained in the program for 90 days. A judge sentenced the offenders to the program and retained authority throughout their time in boot camp. Few offenders were dismissed from the program (9 percent); when they were dismissed they returned to the judge for resentencing. The offenders were, on average: 20 years old; 55 percent white; 53 percent from rural areas of the state; serving time for burglary, theft, and drug offenses. The program was located at the site of another prison. Georgia's program stood out as the program with the least focus on rehabilitation. Other than a short pre-release program, no time in the daily schedule was devoted to any therapeutic-type activities.

Illinois' program had 230 beds, and offenders spent an average of 121 days in the boot camp. Male and female participants were selected from those entering prison. Approximately 41 percent of the entrants were dismissed before completing the boot camp. Inmates spent 3 hours per day in education and counseling programs (including drug treatment). They were required to volunteer for the program and could voluntarily leave at any time. Those who successfully completed the program were intensively supervised in the community beginning with a period of electronic monitoring. The average offender in the boot camp was black (61 percent), 21 years old with 11 years of formal schooling, serving time for burglary or drug offenses.

Louisiana's program also selected male and female participants from those who had been sentenced to prison. The program had 120 beds devoted to the boot camp. A large proportion (43 percent) of the entrants dropped out before graduation. Offenders spent 3.5 hours per day in therapeutic-type activities. They were required to volunteer and allowed to drop out at any time. The in-prison boot camp was considered phase one of the program; during phase two offenders were intensively supervised in the community. Those who graduated from the program, on the average, were 23 years old, nonwhite (57 percent), males (96

percent), serving time for burglary, theft, or drug offenses.

New York's program was by far the largest with 1,500 beds devoted to boot camp prisons. Participants were selected from prison-bound offenders. Approximately 31 percent of the offenders dropped out before graduation. In comparison to offenders in other boot camps, New York's offenders spent the most time (over 5 hours per day) in education, drug treatment, and counseling activities. Offenders had to volunteer for the boot camps and could drop out at any time. Upon release, boot camp graduates were intensively supervised in the community. Those who returned to New York City received an enhanced aftercare program that helped them with employment, drug treatment, and counseling. Graduates were 21 years old with 10 years of education, black (43 percent) or Hispanic (35 percent), serving time for drug offenses.

Oklahoma's shock incarceration program, the Regimented Inmate Discipline Program (RID), was developed by the Oklahoma Department of Corrections in response to the passage of the Non-Violent Intermediate Offender Act in 1983. RID inmates spend between 90 and 180 days in the program. The capacity of the program at the time of data collection was 150. Participants had to be males between the ages of 17 and 25. The program had no mental or physical health requirements or limitations based on past history. Participants could not have been convicted of a violent offense. Only 10 percent of the entrants were dismissed from the program. Those who had problems with the program due to physical or mental limitations were placed in a special squad. The rehabilitation aspect of the program focused on academic education. Offenders spent 3 hours per day in class. The average offender in the boot camp was 20 years old with 10 years of education, and most were white (63 percent) serving a sentence for burglary, theft, or drugs.

South Carolina's program changed during the time of the study. Initially, the program was a probation program, and offenders were selected from probation caseloads. Later, under the authority of the department of corrections, participants were selected from those who had received prison sentences. Throughout this time the program was run by the department of corrections. Offenders spent less than 2 hours per day in counseling and education, and most of this time was spent in academic education. Offenders had to volunteer to enter the program, and they could drop out at any time. Relatively few people dropped out of the program (16 percent). In all, the program had 120 beds. Offenders were 19 years old with 12 years of education. Forty-two percent were nonwhite, 87 percent were male, and the type of offense varied (theft, drugs, violent/person, other).

Texas had 200 beds devoted to its boot camp prison. Offenders spent an average of 81 days in the program. Relatively few were dismissed (10 percent). They were sent to the program by the sentencing judge. Participants did not volunteer for the program and could not voluntarily drop out. When they returned to the court for resentencing they could be sentenced (and some were) to prison despite the fact that they had completed the boot camp. The original program devoted very little time to any type of therapeutic programming (less than 1 hour). However, through a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant, the program was able to enhance its drug treatment component for those who wanted to participate in treatment activities. The offenders were, on average, 21 years old with a tenth grade education. About half were white, and a substantial number were Hispanic (18 percent) and black (32 percent) offenders. Almost all were serving time for burglary, theft, or drug offenses.

In summary, there were differences among these programs and these differences were expected to have an impact on the attitudes and behavior of the participants. To obtain information about the programs and the experiences of those involved, we interviewed inmates, correctional staff, and probation and parole agents responsible for supervising boot camp releaseses.

Interviews With Inmates and Correctional Personnel

In general boot camp inmates reported that the programs were more stressful than they had anticipated. They found the rules, discipline, and activity schedule difficult, particularly during the first few weeks. In their opinion the positive aspects of the programs were that the program enabled them to become physically fit and drug-free. In the boot camps that included treatment or education, participants reported that they benefited from these programs. Conversely, inmates complained about verbal abuse, quality and/or quantity of the food, harsh treatment by staff, and too little sleep.

Correctional officers working in many of the boot camps were very enthusiastic about the programs. In their opinion, such programs offered young offenders a second chance. In general, they viewed their role as being supportive and helpful in enabling offenders to take responsibility for their actions and to change in positive ways. Probation and parole officers were generally more skeptical about the boot camp programs. They did report that the improved appearance and training helped offenders in obtaining employment. They emphasized how difficult it was for the offenders when they returned home to dysfunctional families, drug-using peers, and lack of occupational opportunities.

As a result of the interviews with program personnel and an examination of the written program materials, we concluded that the two major goals of the boot camp prisons were to: (1) change offenders and (2) reduce prison crowding. To investigate whether these goals had been achieved, we designed the study to investigate the impact of the boot camps on the individual inmates' attitudes, on recidivism, on positive activities, and on the need for prison beds.

Attitude Change During Incarceration

Inmate attitudes were examined once at the beginning of the inmates' incarceration in the boot camps and again near the completion of the program. The attitude changes of the boot camp inmates during this time were compared to the attitude changes of offenders serving time in traditional prisons. The results indicated that offenders in boot camp prison leave the prison less antisocial than they were before entering. Additionally, they become more positive about their experiences, their future, and how they have benefited from the program.

The attitudes of offenders serving time in the traditional prison also became less antisocial during the offenders' time in prison. However, unlike the attitudes of the boot camp offenders, the attitudes of the prisoners toward their experiences and the future did not change in a positive direction. Thus, the boot camp offenders were leaving the boot camp feeling that they had a positive experience that gave them hope for the future. Those who left the traditional prison did not feel this way. However, both groups left with less antisocial attitudes. In past research these attitudes have been found to be associated with criminal activities—that is, those who are more antisocial are involved in more criminal activities.

The consistency of the results across the different state programs was surprising. It led us to conclude that there was something in the boot camp atmosphere that did have a positive impact on the offenders. There are many possible reasons for the positive attitudes of the inmates leaving the shock programs. Possibly any short-term program where staff were truly interested and concerned about the inmates would lead to similar changes. Since positive attitude change occurred in the programs that did not have a focus on rehabilitation as well as those that did, these positive attitudes do not appear to result from the therapy or educational programming. However, the positive attitudes may be conducive to improved performance and enthusiasm when rehabilitation programs are offered. There was some evidence in the research to support this because program characteristics such as rehabilitation, program rigor, or voluntariness were associated with greater reductions in antisocial attitudes.

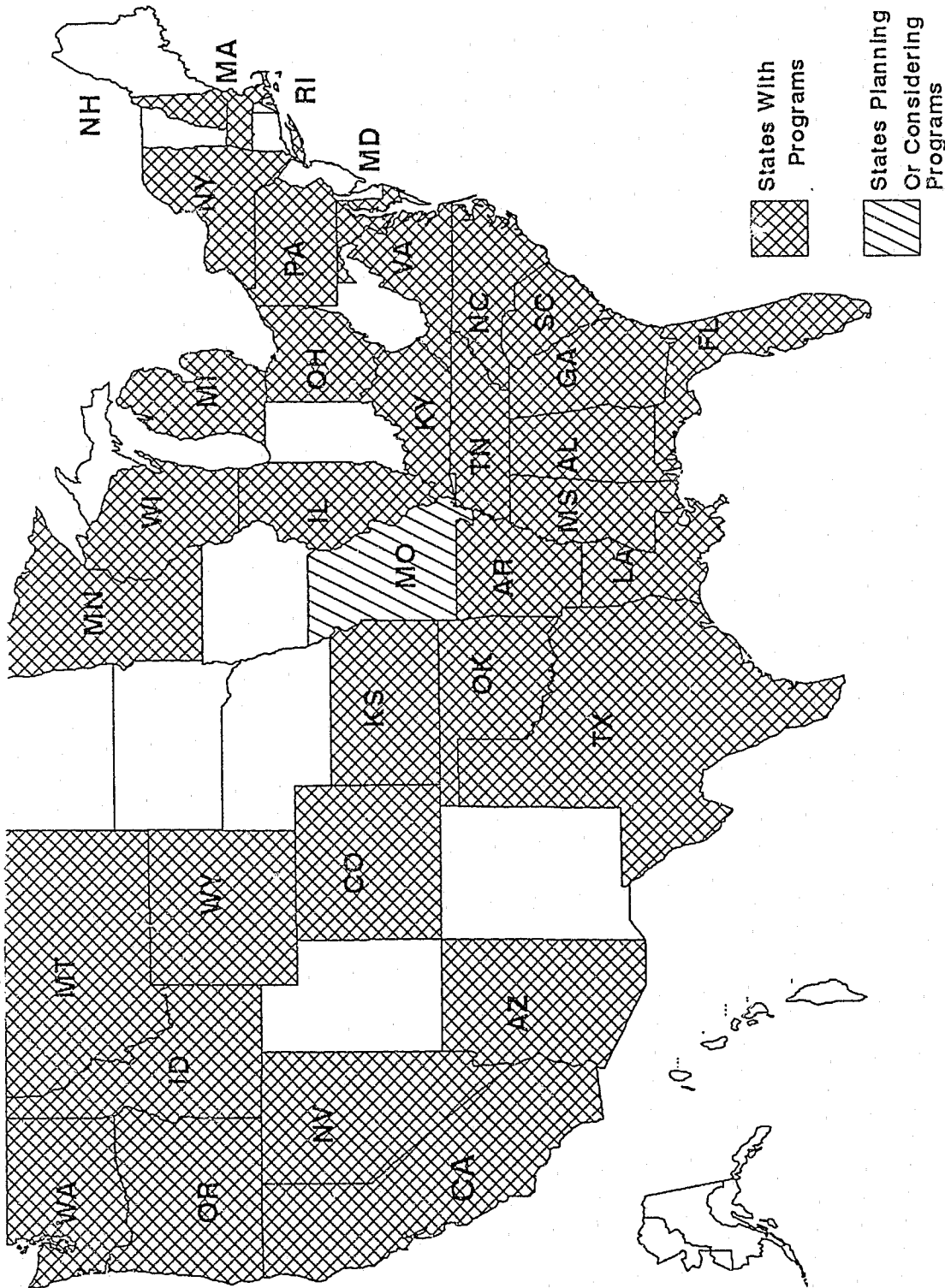


FIGURE 1. SHOCK INCARCERATION PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES, MARCH 1994

Impact on Recidivism

The recidivism rates of releasees were compared to those of similar offenders who were on probation or parole. Recidivism rates differed greatly depending upon length of time in the community, method of measuring recidivism, type of correctional sanction, and the state being examined. The study examined rearrests, revocations for new crimes, and revocations for technical violations after offenders had been in the community for 1 or (where possible) 2 years. The estimated recidivism rates for boot camp graduates varied from 23 percent to 63 percent for rearrests, between 1.3 percent and 13 percent for new crime revocations, and between 2.1 percent and 14.5 percent for technical violations.

There were no significant differences between the boot camp releasees and the offenders in comparison groups on any of the recidivism measures for offenders in Texas and Oklahoma (in these states the data did not allow us to distinguish between new crime and technical revocations). In Georgia, the boot camp offenders did not differ from parolees in recidivism, but they were more likely to have had their supervision revoked for a new crime when compared to the probationers.

There were differences among samples in Florida and South Carolina. However, a careful examination of the results suggested that these differences were a function of the selection process rather than any impact of the boot camp prison. In Florida this was indicated by the fact that dropouts from the program and successful graduates performed similarly. Those who dropped out of the program usually did so very soon after arrival; therefore, it is unlikely that the program could have had an impact on them after such a short time.

The South Carolina results indicated that when probationers had been selected for the program, their behavior during community supervision was similar to that of probationers. Similarly, when prisoners were selected as boot camp participants, they performed identically to parolees from prison and not like the probationers. Given these results, we concluded that any differences between boot camp releasees and others in these two states resulted from preexisting differences in the characteristics of the boot camp participants and offenders in comparison samples, not from any impact of the program.

In Louisiana, Illinois, and New York, there was some evidence, although somewhat ambiguous, that boot camp graduates may have lower recidivism rates on some, but not all, measures of recidivism. In Louisiana and Illinois, boot camp graduates had fewer new crime revocations than prison parolees, but in Illinois they had more technical revocations. The increased rate of

revocations due to technical violations may be due to the fact that boot camp graduates were intensively supervised upon release. However, supervision intensity does not necessarily explain the lower rate of new crime revocations.

New York graduates were less likely to have had their supervision status revoked as a result of a technical violation.⁴ However, there were no differences among samples in New York when arrests or new crime revocations were examined. Program graduates in New York were intensely supervised and, in addition, they received enhanced aftercare during this time period. The reduced technical violations may be a result of this enhanced aftercare that gave offenders employment, counseling, and drug treatment opportunities.

At this point we are hesitant to conclude that boot camp prisons have significantly affected the behavior of offenders who graduated from the programs. The greatest obstacle to drawing this conclusion is the fact that in the three states where there were some differences in recidivism, the boot camp releasees received more intense supervision than offenders in the comparison groups. Any differences could be due to this supervision, not from the in-prison phase of the program. However, it is notable that the three programs where offenders had lower recidivism rates on some measures were the programs that devoted the most time during the boot camp to therapeutic-type activities. Generally, these three programs were longer, chose participants from prison-bound offenders, and had higher dropout rates. These characteristics were not exclusive to the three programs. For example, Florida also had a high dropout rate and selected offenders from those sentenced to prison. And, Oklahoma offenders spent a relatively long period per day in therapeutic activities. Yet boot camp releasees did not have lower recidivism rates than offenders in the comparison groups in either Florida or Oklahoma.

The only boot camp releasees who did worse than offenders in the comparison group were in Georgia. At the time, the Georgia program was short-term, had little therapy and few dropouts, and most likely admitted many participants who would otherwise have been on probation. This represents a stark contrast from the Illinois, Louisiana, and New York programs.

Thus, there are a cluster of program components that are characteristic of these three programs where on some measures of recidivism the boot camp releasees had lower recidivism rates. Most notable is that the graduates of these programs were also intensively supervised when they were released. It must be reiterated that this research could not untangle the effects of the intensive supervision from the effects of the in-prison boot camp phase of the program. Our belief is

that the intensive supervision phase is a critical aspect.

If the core components of boot camps (military atmosphere, drill, hard labor, physical training) reduced recidivism, we would have expected that the boot camp releasees in all states would do better than the offenders in the comparison groups. This did not happen; therefore, the military atmosphere does not appear to reduce recidivism. Numerous critics of the programs propose that these boot camps will have a detrimental effect. There was no evidence that the boot camps had a negative effect on the offenders' recidivism rates. The releasees did as well as offenders in comparison groups on all measures of recidivism in all states and for all samples except in one case on one measure (Georgia).

There is some evidence that in some cases the boot camp releasees have lower recidivism rates. There are similarities among these boot camps. Unfortunately, the research design does not allow us to separate the effects of intensive supervision, rehabilitation, and other similarities from the military boot camp atmosphere. We do not know if offenders who received a strong rehabilitation program without the military aspects followed by intensive supervision would do as well as these releasees from these boot camps.

Positive Activities During Community Supervision

The positive adjustment of offenders during community supervision was examined using an index that indicated their involvement in positive activities such as employment, treatment, financial and housing stability, and relationships with family as reported by the community supervision agent. The adjustment of offenders released from boot camps in five states was compared to the adjustment of similar offenders during community supervision. Boot camp releasees in Georgia, Louisiana, New York, and South Carolina adjusted, as well as, but no better than, similar offenders on probation or parole. Only in Florida did the boot camp releasees adjust better than offenders in the comparison group. It is difficult to identify why this occurred only in Florida. Nothing stands out in the program that would explain why these boot camp releasees did better during community supervision.

In three states, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina, information was available regarding the intensity of supervision (measured by average number of contacts) during the year of community supervision. More intense supervision was associated with better adjustment for both the boot camp releasees and the offenders in the comparison groups. These results suggested that offenders could be coerced to participate in positive activities while they are in the community.

Impact on Prison Crowding

Data from five states were used to estimate the savings in, or conversely, the loss of, bedspace that resulted from the boot camp program.⁵ The model made use of the recidivism rates, durations of imprisonment, dismissal rates, and program capacity to estimate the impact of the program. The probability that the offenders would have been in prison or on probation was varied to examine the effect on bedspace.

Results indicated that a boot camp prison could be designed to reduce prison crowding. However, it had to be carefully designed so that entrants were selected from those who would have been in prison. If program entrants were chosen from offenders who would have been on probation, the programs would require additional prison beds. That is, if the net of control were widened and probationers were put in the boot camp, the prison system would need more beds to accommodate the program. Reducing recidivism rates by 50 percent did not substantially change the need for prison beds.

In three states, New York, Louisiana, and Florida, offenders entering boot camp were already sentenced to prison. In these states the departments of corrections identified participants for the boot camps, and, therefore, it was assumed that the majority of offenders in the program would have been in prison if the program had not existed. For this reason it was concluded that the boot camp had the potential for reducing prison crowding. However, when the model was run using data from these states, the results indicated that only in New York and Louisiana would the program have any appreciable impact on prison crowding. Due to the large size of the New York boot camps (1,500 beds) estimated bed savings were substantial (1,000 to 1,700 beds per year). Estimates were much smaller for the Louisiana program (approximately 300 beds).

The program in Florida saved almost no beds (estimates ranged from a loss of 24 beds to a gain of 100 beds). Most likely this was because of the high dismissal rate (52 percent) in addition to the fact that offenders released from the boot camp served only slightly shorter terms in prison than did similar prisoners. Therefore, the boot camps were not resulting in earlier release for the graduates.

From these analyses of the impacts of the programs on bedspace, we concluded that if the programs are used as early release mechanisms and a sufficient number of offenders are released earlier than they would have if they had served their sentence in a traditional prison, the boot camps could save prison beds. Essentially, the savings would come because the boot camp would be used as an early release option that permits some offenders to earn their way out of prison earlier than they would otherwise be released.

After examining the programs and the decisionmaking processes in Georgia and South Carolina, we concluded that these programs admitted a substantial number of offenders who would otherwise have been on probation. Therefore, these programs (as they were designed at the time) most likely increased the need for prison beds because these probationers would not otherwise have been in prison.

Summary

In this study we investigated the impact of boot camps in eight states. The results indicate some positive impact from the programs (attitudes) and in the ways they are implemented in some states (reduction in prison crowding). On other measures (recidivism, positive adjustment), we cannot confidently draw conclusions about the effect of the boot camp atmosphere. In almost all states, the releasees did as well as those who received other correctional sanctions but they did not do better. In the few cases where they did better we cannot be sure what influence the boot camp atmosphere had. The impact may be from other aspects of the programs such as rehabilitation or followup programming and intensive supervision. The inconsistent results across states led us to conclude that the military atmosphere alone does not reduce recidivism and increase positive activities during community supervision. It may be effective in combination with rehabilitation programs, intensive supervision, or enhanced aftercare, but this research was not able to identify the effect of these separate components.

The current crime bill before the U. S. Congress proposes an enormous increase in funding for boot camp prisons. The research reported here makes it obvious that to increase the number and types of boot camps without, at the same time, investigating their impact on the individuals involved and on the correctional systems would be irresponsible. We would never distribute new medicine or permit a new medical procedure to be used without intensive studies and clinical trials to examine its adequacy and safety for all concerned. Overall, the results of this research indicate that many of these boot camps are not achieving their goals. In medicine we use science to enable us to learn and to progress in the field. In the same way we should use science to help us decide whether boot camp prisons can achieve the desired goals or, if necessary, be redesigned to reach these goals.

NOTES

¹For additional information, see New York State Department of Correctional Services, 1992, 1993; Florida Department of Corrections,

1989; Flowers et al., 1991; Illinois Bureau of Administration and Planning, 1991; Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections, 1992; South Carolina State Reorganization Commission, 1992.

²See MacKenzie and Souryal (1994) for details of the methodology and data analyses.

³Please note that the programs are described as they were at the time of the study (between 1987 and 1990). Since then there have been substantial changes in many of the programs.

⁴Revocations rates in New York were for returns to prison for either new crimes or for technical violations.

⁵See D.L. MacKenzie and A. Piquero (1994), "The Impact of Shock Incarceration Programs on Prison Crowding," *Crime & Delinquency*, 40(2), 222-249, for description of models giving high and low estimates.

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