

Is Getting Tough With Low-Risk Kids a Good Idea? The Effect of Failure to Appear Detention Stays on Juvenile Recidivism

Criminal Justice Policy Review

2019, Vol. 30(4) 507–537

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DOI: 10.1177/0887403416682299

journals.sagepub.com/home/cjp

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Abstract

Although the juvenile justice system has adopted many alternatives to detention, the practice of detaining youth for failing to appear in court remains common. Despite its widespread use, it is unclear whether this form of detainment is harmful to juvenile offenders—especially to those who pose no credible threat to public safety. Accordingly, using data from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) and propensity score matching, we assess whether failure to appear (FTA) detention increases recidivism for low-risk youth. The results indicate that FTA detention increases official recidivism, technical recidivism, and re-detainment, and suggest that alternate policies be considered for low-risk juvenile offenders.

Keywords

juvenile detention, failure to appear, propensity score matching, juvenile recidivism

Perhaps the most well-perpetuated myth within the realm of juvenile justice is that “teaching kids a lesson” through harsh disciplinary tactics deters youth from future offending behavior. This philosophy led to the adoption of numerous punitive policies, practices, and programs reflective of the “get tough era,” such as the increased use of bench commitments to deep end juvenile justice services (Frazier, Bishop, & Lanza-Kaduce, 1999), relaxed standards for waivers and judicial transfers to the adult criminal justice system (Deitch, Barstow, Lukens, & Reyna, 2009; Shook & Sarri, 2008;

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Sickmund, 2003), juvenile boot camps (MacKenzie, Wilson, Armstrong, & Gover, 2001), “Scared Straight” prison tours (Maahs & Pratt, 2016), and increased uses of mandatory detention (Mears & Field, 2000; Torbet & Szymanski, 1998). Despite their popularity, empirical assessments have largely found these approaches to be ineffective, finding neither significant reductions in future offending nor benefits to the youth’s well-being or public safety (Bishop, Frazier, Lanza-Kaduce, & Winner, 1996; Redding, 2003; Scott & Steinberg, 2008). In addition to their questionable efficacy, these punitive approaches stand in stark opposition to the rehabilitative ideals that initially gave rise to the juvenile justice system (Feld, 2007; Leiber & Peck, 2015). In light of these concerns, more humane, youth-centered policies have been adopted in recent years (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013; Ashkar & Kenny, 2008; Levin, 2010), even for the highest risk juvenile offenders (see, for example, Trulson, Haerle, Caudill, & DeLisi, 2016).

And yet, despite these efforts, many juvenile justice practices borne out of the “get tough” movement still linger (Schlossman & Welsh, 2015). One of the most widespread of these is the mandatory practice of placing youth who fail to appear in court into secure detention facilities. These stays in detention typically last up to 72 hours, and are intended to ensure that youth show up for their next scheduled hearing (since youth are typically escorted to court from the detention facility). Although there are both practical and retributive reasons for detaining youth for failing to appear, this practice places behind bars many low-risk juveniles who might not otherwise experience confinement. This practice is concerning given the body of research suggesting that juvenile detention stays carry many unintended, criminogenic consequences for youth (Blomberg, Bales, Mann, Piquero, & Berk, 2011; Mears & Travis, 2004; Welty et al., 2016), particularly for nonserious juvenile offenders (Cullen & Jonson, 2017; Lambie & Randell, 2013; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2004).

While there are reasons to believe that failure to appear (FTA) detention stays may be criminogenic for low-risk youth (Monahan, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2015; Piquero, 2008), few empirical assessments have been conducted to determine whether this is actually the case. Accordingly, in the current study, we use data from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) and propensity score matching (PSM) techniques to assess whether FTA detention stays increase recidivism for low-risk offenders (i.e., juvenile misdemeanor offenders with no prior history of confinement). In carrying out this investigation, we hope to gain a better understanding of whether FTA detention stays should be used for nonserious juvenile offenders. More broadly, the results from this study will contribute to the accumulating empirical research on evidence-based practices for youth within the juvenile justice system.

Juvenile Detention

Violent crime in the United States rose at an alarming rate between 1985 and 1993, with some scholars attributing the lion’s share of this increase to juvenile offenders (Blumstein, 2006; Blumstein & Wallman, 2006). This increase in violent crime, coupled with the media’s promulgation of the coming of the “Super Predators” (DiIulio,

1995), helped to spur a moral panic that youth were becoming more violent and uncontrollable than ever before, threatening only to get worse in the coming years (Abrams, 2013; Bishop, 2006; Jenson & Howard, 1998). The juvenile justice system followed the rest of the nation in embracing the “get tough on crime” response to this concern by adopting more punitive penalties for youth which relied largely on increased mandatory confinement policies (Stevens & Morash, 2015). At the same time, juvenile facilities underwent notable punitive changes, attempting to mimic adult jails and prisons (Abrams, 2013).

Perhaps the most eye-opening consequence of these changes is that the United States now leads the industrialized world in youth confinement (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). According to Mendel (2014), every year, approximately 300,000 juveniles are admitted to detention facilities nationwide, and approximately 20,000 are held in detention on a nightly basis. This volume is problematic given the collateral harms linked to juvenile confinement in prior research. Prior research provides evidence of both short-term and long-term harms, ranging from depression, low self-esteem, and self-injurious behaviors during confinement (Fazel, Doll, & Långström, 2008; Hayes, 2009; Wasserman, McReynolds, Schwalbe, Keating, & Jones, 2010), to low educational attainment, job instability, unemployment, substance abuse, and future imprisonment later in life (Stahlkopf, Males, & Macallair, 2010; van der Geest, Bijleveld, Blokland, & Nagin, 2016; Welty et al., 2016). Indeed, detention not only disrupts the prosocial elements of a youth’s daily life, such as schooling and associating with prosocial peers (Abrams & Snyder, 2010; Alemagno, Stephens, & Shaffer-King, 2012; Lambie & Randell, 2013), but the experience is often riddled with increased risks of abuse from both peers and detention center staff (Dierkhising, Lane, & Natsuaki, 2014; Garland, Moore, Stohr, & Kyle, 2016; Maggard, 2015). These harmful effects are further exacerbated by the youthful state of the offender’s brain which current research suggests is still undergoing major developmental milestones until approximately age 25 (Abrams, 2013; Beckman, 2004; Lambie & Randell, 2013).

Reports of abuse and substandard living conditions have also been documented by empirical research. Mendel (2014) reported that one in 10 confined youth are sexually abused by staff or other youth, and that 42% fear physical attack. In addition, a review of New York state-run juvenile correctional facilities conducted by the Vera Institute of Justice (2009) found an absence of adequate mental health, physical health, or appropriate educational services in these facilities, and concluded that youth are unjustly subject to violence, substandard living conditions, and harsh practices such as shackling and restraints. Additional research supports that New York is not an isolated case (Abrams, 2013), and many other investigations of state- and county-run detention and correctional facilities report similar findings (Aalsma et al., 2015; Davidson-Arad, 2005; Peterson-Badali & Koegl, 2002).

The negative consequences of detention are not only felt by youth who serve lengthy sentences behind bars, they are also felt by youth who experience pretrial detention. The literature has overwhelmingly found that the decision to detain youth prior to their trial date significantly increases the depth and severity of subsequent sanctions they receive, above and beyond the effect of demographic and other relevant

legal covariates (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006; Mendel, 2014; Rodriguez, 2010). The disproportionate minority contact literature has repeatedly warned that detaining youth may force them farther into the justice system than necessary (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Frazier & Bishop, 1985; Leiber & Bogess, 2012). In addition, youth who have been detained have been found to recidivate at very high rates (Ashkar & Kenny, 2008; Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006; Mendel, 2011). Even though youth who experience FTA detention stays are detained for a relatively short period of time (i.e., 72 hours or less), it is possible that this form of detention can still place youth at risk for a variety of adverse consequences, including recidivism and subsequent detainment.

Detaining Youth for Failing to Appear in Court

FTA detention stays are unique from other forms of pretrial detention practices in that they disproportionately impact low-level juvenile offenders (Rosenbaum et al., 2012). In many jurisdictions, when youth fail to appear in court, the judge issues a mandatory detention pick-up order (FDJJ, 2013; Mendel, 2009) that often results in the youth's first experience with confinement. Most youth who have been confined previously will be detained after their initial arrest/referral, and will not be allowed to await their trial date in the community (Armstrong & Rodriguez, 2005; Bailey, 1981; O'Neill, 2002). These pretrial detention decisions are based on how high youth score on a validated risk-screening tool, where youth with more serious offenses and lengthier arrest records score for pretrial detention (Maggard, 2015; Maloney & Miller, 2015; Orlando, 1999). Thus, youth who are issued FTA pick-up orders are generally not considered a threat to public safety as they scored low enough on risk-assessment instruments to remain in the community after their initial arrest/referral. This calls the value of detaining such low-risk offenders into question, especially as the potentially harmful nature of exposing youth to confinement has been well documented by previous research (Maggard, 2015; Mallett, Fukushima, Stoddard-Dare, & Quinn, 2013; Wermink, Blokland, Nieuwbeerta, Nagin, & Tollenaar, 2010).

Unlike youth who are ordered to receive pretrial detention during an initial hearing (usually 24 hours after their arrest), FTA detention stays are ordered without a hearing designed to determine the need for such a practice (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2015). In addition to deterrence, the justification for detaining youth for failing to appear may possibly rely on the benefits it affords to the juvenile justice system in terms of financial costs, efficiency, and threats to legitimacy. When a youth fails to appear for his or her court date, all of the juvenile justice actors must still be paid for appearing in court on the original court date as well as the new date that will be set subsequent to the pick-up order. This, combined with the fact that any court fees as well as restitution owed by the youth will not be paid on that day, creates a financial burden that would not have existed had the youth appeared in court (O'Keefe, 2007; Rosenbaum et al., 2012; Tomkins, Bornstein, Herian, Rosenbaum, & Neeley, 2012). Having to set an additional court date not only drags out the length of the youth's court processing but also increases the caseload burden of an already taxed juvenile justice system. Thus, the efficiency with which the system can process new

referrals is diminished. Finally, the legitimacy of the juvenile justice system is undermined when youth do not adhere to the sanctions imposed on them. Willfully failing to appear in court qualifies as defiance that must be addressed by the court to protect its authority.

Even so, in a broader sense, we have few empirical reasons to believe that mandatory detention policies are effective in deterring youth from failing to appear in court (FDJJ, 2013). Indeed, similar types of deterrence-based policies have not been successful with adult offenders (Cullen & Jonson, 2017; Cullen, Pratt, & Turanovic, 2016). These types of punitive practices also show little concern for the long-term well-being of youth who end up experiencing FTA detention, many of whom are low-level offenders. Out of concern that FTA detention policies disproportionately affect low-risk juveniles, some jurisdictions, such as Ramsey County (St. Paul), Minnesota, have moved to eliminate these types of detention stays for low-risk youth altogether. In addition, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) has outlined that existing policies be revised to avoid detaining youth who pose no significant threats to public safety. Nevertheless, there is limited juvenile justice research upon which to base these recommendations, and the impact of FTA detention on youthful offenders, particularly for outcomes like recidivism, remains unclear.

Current Focus

Given the discussion above, the current study seeks to determine whether introducing low-risk youth to confinement through FTA detention stays increases their likelihood of recidivism. Using a sample of misdemeanor juvenile offenders from Florida, we examine whether youth exposed to FTA detention are more likely than their similarly situated counterparts to (a) have a new adjudicated offense within 2 years of release (i.e., "official recidivism"), (b) have a new technical offense within 2 years of release (i.e., "technical recidivism"), or (c) be placed in detention within 2 years of release (i.e., "re-detainment"). The findings from this study will aid in determining whether FTA detention stays should continue to be used for low-risk juvenile offenders.

Method

Data

The present study uses data from the FDJJ. Recent estimates from FDJJ (2016) showed that approximately 25% of admissions to secure detention for a technical offense (and 12% of all statewide detention admissions) are for FTA warrants. A significant number of youth are detained for failing to appear in court in each year (approximately 4,000 according to recent FDJJ estimates), suggesting the effects of this practice warrant attention. The current study assesses this practice using a sample of youth who committed a misdemeanor offense and were either detained for failing to appear in court¹ or were placed on probation. The FDJJ maintains a centralized database, the juvenile justice information system (JJIS) that contains complete social, offense, placement,

and risk-assessment history data for all youth referred for delinquency (Baglivio, Wolff, Jackowski, & Greenwald, 2015). Florida presents a unique opportunity to study a diverse body of youth living in an array of rural, suburban, and urban settings with various socioeconomic and racially/culturally diverse contexts.

The FDJJ data contain information not only on offense history and juvenile justice case processing variables, but also on familial context, education, mental health, and other youth characteristics generated by the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) screening. All data were taken from the pre-PACT portion of the assessment so there were no missing data across the samples. The pre-PACT identifies youth's criminogenic needs and estimates their overall risk to reoffend using elements from 11 different domains of the youth's life, including record of referrals, current school status, historical and current relationships, family history, current living arrangements, historical and current substance use, aggression, attitudes, behaviors, and mental health history. Because many of these characteristics are likely to change quite often in the population studied, it was necessary to use recent PACT screenings to ensure the data were accurate. Recent PACT screenings refer to those occurring within 1 year prior to the admission date to secure detention or probation.²

Study Sample

The current study focuses on 857 youth who committed a misdemeanor offense and were subsequently either detained for failing to appear in court or were placed on probation in the state of Florida. The youth detained for failing to appear were the treatment group, and the probation youth were used to create a comparable control group. Youth were eligible for the study if their current offense was a misdemeanor, they had never experienced confinement prior to their release from detention or probation during calendar year 2012, and if they were 16 years old or younger at the time of their release. There were 857 youth who met these criteria: 340 of them were detained for an FTA and 517 were placed on probation.

The purpose of including only misdemeanor youth was to limit the severity of the sample and ensure that detaining these youth prior to their court date was not necessary for public safety, but rather to ensure the youth appeared in court. Using a less-serious sample also allows for the possibility that these youth may remain in the community prior to their court hearing without creating a public safety concern. Approximately 81% of the total sample was low risk to reoffend and 95% were either low or moderate risk as indicated by the PACT screen's estimated overall risk to reoffend. Research has shown that the harmful effects of incarceration are magnified for lower risk youth and that reform efforts consistently target these youth as the best candidates for diversion from secure detention, so this population is of particular interest for those reasons as well (Mendel, 2014). The purpose of selecting youth who had never experienced confinement before was to isolate the effect of initial confinement on recidivism. Finally, the age restriction allowed for a 2-year follow-up period within the juvenile justice system, as the age of juvenile jurisdiction in Florida ends at 18 years.

Treatment Variable

FTA detention stay is measured using a dichotomous indicator (1 = yes; 0 = no) of whether a youth was released from a secure detention stay in 2012 that was predicated by an FTA court order. Florida Statute 985.215 subsection (1) states that a child is

detained on a judicial order for failure to appear and has previously willfully failed to appear, after proper notice, for an adjudicatory hearing on the same case regardless of the results of the risk assessment instrument. A child may be held in secure detention for up to 72 hours in advance of the next scheduled court hearing pursuant to this paragraph. The child's failure to keep the clerk of court and defense counsel informed of a current and valid mailing address where the child will receive notice to appear at court proceedings does not provide an adequate ground for excusal of the child's nonappearance at the hearings.

The judicial order is given by a judge and results in a warrant to pick up and detain the youth pursuant to the statutory language above; however, the judge does have some discretionary power in whether or not to issue the order. These decisions are heavily based on prior offending history (Bishop, Leiber, & Johnson, 2010; Cauffman et al., 2007; Leiber, 2016), severity of the presenting offense (Espinosa, Sorensen, & Lopez, 2013; Leiber & Peck, 2015), and risk level, as well as extralegal variables such as age, race (Burgess-Proctor, Holtrop, & Villarruel, 2008; Guevara, Herz, & Spohn, 2006; Leiber, Peck, & Beaudry-Cyr, 2016), and gender (Armstrong & Kim, 2011; Espinosa & Sorensen, 2016; MacDonald & Chesney-Lind, 2001) which we have controlled for through the use of PSM, described in more detail below.

Dependent Variables

The importance of measuring reoffending behavior with multiple indicators, particularly emphasizing the role of technical offending, has been addressed by previous studies (Hoffman & Stone-Meierhoefer, 1978; King & Elderbroom, 2014; Ostermann, Salerno, & Hyatt, 2015). Three different measures (all dichotomous, where 1 = yes and 0 = no) of recidivism were therefore used in the current study to account for this: official recidivism, technical recidivism, and subsequent juvenile detainment. Although we recognize that FDJJ's official definition of recidivism uses a 12-month follow-up period, to be more consistent with the broader juvenile justice recidivism literature (McGarrell & Hipple, 2007; Podkopacz & Feld, 1996; Rodriguez, 2007), we measured *official recidivism* as a new adjudication or adjudication withheld for a felony or misdemeanor within 2 years of the release date.³ The most common offense which fell under this category was petit larceny, which accounted for approximately 22% of youth who officially recidivated. *Technical recidivism* was defined as a new technical or status offense such as violations of probation, county or municipal orders, nonfelony traffic offenses, or noncriminal infractions within 2 years of the release date. The most common forms of technical recidivism were law enforcement officer violations of probation (31% of those who technically recidivated), new-law

violations of probation (24% of those who technically recidivated), and nonlaw violations of probation (16% of those who technically recidivated). *Re-detainment* was defined as a stay in secure detention whose begin date was within 2 years of release from probation or the FTA detention stay.

Matching Variables

For the matching analysis, measures were taken from the closest PACT screen prior to the probation or detention stay start date. Covariates were chosen for inclusion in the matching algorithm based on prior research suggesting that they may bias selection into the FTA detention group or confound the relationship between detention and recidivism (e.g., Abrams & Snyder, 2010; Day, Zahn, & Tichavsky, 2015; King et al., 2011). The following general categories were matched on: demographics, criminal justice processing and involvement, family context, individual youth characteristics, and presenting offense.

Several demographic variables were included as covariates. *Male* was a dichotomous indicator (1 = male; 0 = female). Race and ethnicity were captured using dummy variables: *Black* (1 = yes; 0 = no), *Hispanic* (1 = yes; 0 = no), and *other non-White* race or ethnicity (1 = yes; 0 = no), with White as the reference category. Overall, the sample was predominantly comprised of racial and ethnic minorities (66% were either Black or Hispanic) and males (67%).

Criminal justice processing and involvement was captured by six variables. *Prior misdemeanors* was measured using an ordinal variable ranging from 1 to 3 (where 1 = none or one prior misdemeanor referral, 2 = two prior misdemeanor referrals, and 3 = three or more prior misdemeanor referrals). There is no distinction made between zero and one misdemeanor referral on the PACT screen. *Prior felonies* was also measured as an ordinal variable ranging from 1 to 3 (where 1 = no prior felony referrals, 2 = one prior felony referral, and 3 = two or more prior felony referrals). *Age at referral for current offense* was calculated by subtracting the date of referral from the youth's date of birth and rounding down to nearest whole number. *Age at first offense* (coded as 1 = 12 years and under, 2 = 13-14 years, and 3 = 15 years) and *risk to reoffend* as measured by the PACT were also included.⁴ *Formal arrest for presenting offense* was measured as a dichotomous variable (1 = yes; 0 = no) indicating whether there was an arrest date on the referral for the presenting offense and thus whether the youth was brought to a juvenile assessment center rather than notified of their court date through the mail or similar means. *Circuit of disposition* was measured dichotomously (1 = yes; 0 = no) for each of the 20 judicial circuits in Florida⁵ with Circuit 13 comprising the reference category (approximately 12% of cases in the sample).

The youth's family context was measured through the use of five variables. *Imprisonment history of current household affiliates* was measured dichotomously (1 = yes; 0 = no). Specifically, this item measures the jail and imprisonment history of any persons who are currently involved with the youth's household. *Foster Care/Child Welfare Services placement* with the Florida Department of Children and Families

(DCF) was measured as a dichotomous indicator (1 = at least one out-of-home placement; 0 = no out-of-home placements). These placements may be either court-ordered or voluntary, but had to exceed 30 days to be counted. *Victim of abuse or neglect*, *youth's current drug use*, and *parent substance use* were also measured dichotomously (1 = yes; 0 = no). *History of running away/getting kicked out of home* was measured using an ordinal variable ranging from 1 to 5 (where 1 = no instances of running away/being kicked out, and 5 = over five instances of running away/getting kicked out).

Eight additional individual youth characteristics were controlled for as well. *Grade point average* (GPA) reflected the youth's GPA in his or her most recent school term, and was measured as a variable ranging from 1 = below 1.0 (some Ds and mostly Fs) to 5 = honor student (mostly As).⁶ *Habitual truancy* reflected whether the youth was habitually truant during the most recent school term (1 = yes; 0 = no), and *mental health problems* was measured dichotomously (1 = youth has a history of mental health problems excluding conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, substance abuse, and ADD/ADHD; 0 = youth has no history of mental health problems). *History of anger/irritability*, *history of depression/anxiety*, and the youth's peer associations (*gang member/associate*, *antisocial peers*, and *prosocial peers*) were also measured using separate dichotomous variables (1 = yes; 0 = no).

The presenting offense for which the youth was placed on probation or failed to appear in court for was also included. The offense categories used were *alcohol or drug offense*, *misdemeanor other*, *petit larceny*, *trespassing*, *vandalism*, and *weapon offense* (1 = yes; 0 = no). *Nonaggravated battery/assault* was used as the reference category as it was the most common presenting offense (33.3% of the total sample). Descriptive statistics for all of the variables included in the study can be seen in Table 1.

Analytic Strategy

This study tests whether misdemeanor offenders who are exposed to secure detention for failing to appear (FTA) in court have significantly higher rates of juvenile recidivism. To carry out our research objectives, this study uses PSM techniques to compare misdemeanor offenders securely detained for failing to appear in court to misdemeanor offenders who appeared in court and were subsequently placed on probation. This method is well suited to the current study as we seek to eliminate the effects of selection bias which makes individuals inherently more likely to be securely detained for failing to appear in court (Apel & Sweeten, 2010; Guo & Fraser, 2015). This bias may be introduced not only by judiciary discretion in issuing warrants for failing to appear in court, but also by additional covariates such as age, gender, ethnicity, prior offense history, and type of current offense, which prior research has shown makes individuals more likely to fail to appear in court (Bechtel, Lowenkamp, & Holsinger, 2011; Morris, 2013). Addressing this problem is critical for determining whether detention itself, or the factors associated with its occurrence (pre-existing factors), contributes to juvenile recidivism. Wolff, Cochran, and Baumer (2014) noted that, "the propensity score

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables.

Variable	Full sample (N = 857)	
	M (SD) or %	Range
Treatment variable		
FTA detention stay	39.7%	0-1
Dependent variables		
Official recidivism	42.6%	0-1
Technical recidivism	49.5%	0-1
Subsequent detainment	47.6%	0-1
Covariates		
Male	67.1%	0-1
Black	51.4%	0-1
Hispanic	14.8%	0-1
Other non-White race/ethnicity	0.5%	0-1
Prior misdemeanors	1.498 (0.680)	1-3
Prior felonies	1.295 (0.516)	1-3
Moderate risk	13.0%	0-1
Moderate/high risk	4.0%	0-1
Age at first offense	1.755 (0.588)	1-3
Age at referral for present offense	13.770 (1.106)	9-15
Arrested for current offense	66.4%	0-1
Current household jail history	28.9%	0-1
DCF placement	9.6%	0-1
Victim of abuse or neglect	10.8%	0-1
Current drug use	24.3%	0-1
Parent substance use	5.5%	0-1
History of running away	1.410 (0.983)	1-5
GPA	2.560 (1.002)	0-5
Habitual truancy	8.0%	0-1
History of depression	27.5%	0-1
Mental health problems	17.2%	0-1
Gang member or affiliate	2.2%	0-1
Delinquent peers	67.0%	0-1
Prosocial peers	88.0%	0-1
Alcohol or drug offense	14.4%	0-1
Misdemeanor other/sex offense	14.0%	0-1
Petit larceny	24.6%	0-1
Trespassing	7.5%	0-1
Vandalism	4.8%	0-1
Weapon offense	1.5%	0-1
Circuit 1 disposition	6.5%	0-1
Circuit 2 disposition	2.3%	0-1
Circuit 4 disposition	8.8%	0-1

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variable	Full sample (N = 857)	
	M (SD) or %	Range
Circuit 5 disposition	5.0%	0-1
Circuit 6 disposition	3.0%	0-1
Circuit 7 disposition	5.6%	0-1
Circuit 8 disposition	3.2%	0-1
Circuit 9 disposition	11.3%	0-1
Circuit 10 disposition	8.4%	0-1
Circuit 11 disposition	7.0%	0-1
Circuit 12 disposition	1.8%	0-1
Circuit 14 disposition	1.9%	0-1
Circuit 15 disposition	2.3%	0-1
Circuit 17 disposition	8.2%	0-1
Circuit 18 disposition	2.4%	0-1
Circuit 19 disposition	5.5%	0-1
Circuit 20 disposition	5.0%	0-1

Note. The following reference categories were omitted for brevity: Female, White, Low-Risk, Nonaggravated Assault/Battery, and Circuit 13 Disposition. FTA = failure to appear; DCF = department of child and families; GPA = grade point average.

matching technique is useful for simulating independent assignment of a designated treatment and estimating more directly an independent variable's effects than is typically accomplished with standard regression procedures" (p. 53).

PSM accomplishes this task by creating an appropriate counterfactual (control group) comprised of individuals who have statistically identical likelihoods of receiving a "treatment" (in this case, an FTA detention stay), given the observed covariates used to match the control and treatment groups (Li, 2013). If the matching algorithm chosen is sufficient to produce control and treatment groups with no significant differences between any covariates after matching, then the method has adequately controlled for selection bias and the resulting sample can be used to estimate an unbiased average effect of the treatment on the outcome of interest. Although this estimated treatment effect will be free of confounding influences from selection bias, there may still exist hidden bias from unobserved covariates not included in the matching model. To assess the extent to which this possibility is problematic, Becker and Caliendo (2007) developed the *mhbounds* procedure which applies the methodology of the Rosenbaum bounds sensitivity analysis (Gangl 2004) to dichotomous outcome variables.

For this study, the treatment group consists of youth detained for the first time whose reason for detention was an FTA court order. Using PSM with five-to-one nearest neighbor matching, this group is matched to individuals who had never experienced detention, but were on juvenile probation (and thus had appeared at their court

date). Consistent with prior work (Pyrooz, 2014; Wolff et al., 2014), the average treatment effect on the treated (ATT or ATET) is estimated from the matched sample. Li (2013) stated that, “The ATT refers to the average difference that would be found if everyone in the treated group received treatment compared with if none of these individuals in the treated group received treatment” (p. 190). The same analysis is run on a series of matching algorithms (with various calipers and nearest neighbor specifications) to determine the robustness of the estimated ATT, and *mhbounds* is used in Stata 13 to assess the sensitivity of the results (Becker & Caliendo, 2007; Loughran, Wilson, Nagin, & Piquero, 2015).

The analysis will proceed in five stages. First, bivariate correlations are assessed to ensure that the treatment variable is significantly associated with each distinctive measure of recidivism: official recidivism, technical recidivism, and re-detainment. Chi-square (χ^2) and *t* tests are also conducted at this stage to ensure that the treatment and control groups are significantly different enough to warrant the use of PSM. Second, logistic regression equations are used to assess whether the effect of FTA detention stays on each form of recidivism remains in a multivariate context. If the treatment variable is not statistically significant in a multivariate regression model containing all of the covariates that will be used by PSM to account for selection effects, then there is no need to conduct PSM for that dependent variable. However, if the treatment variable is statistically significant in this multivariate context, it suggests that PSM is necessary to account for selection effects and more accurately specify the effect of the treatment variable (FTA detention) on the dependent variable.

Third, assuming the multivariate context suggests PSM is necessary, a logistic regression model predicting the FTA detention stay is used to generate propensity scores. The propensity score reflects the likelihood that an individual would be detained for an FTA based on the demographic, criminal justice involvement, family context, presenting offense, and individual characteristic covariates included in the regression model. Fourth, youth from the FTA and probation samples are then matched to each other based on these estimated propensity scores using a 5:1 nearest neighbor matching algorithm. One concern often raised with PSM is that without specifying a caliper, the cases matched by the nearest neighbor method may actually be quite dissimilar (Apel & Sweeten, 2010; Caliendo & Kopeinig, 2008). To address this concern, a 0.034 caliper restriction is imposed, meaning that within each match, the difference between the propensity scores of the two individuals is 3.4% or less.⁷ Because propensity scores range from 0.0 to 1.0, this indicates relatively similar cases are being matched. Finally, after matching, the ATT for FTA detention stays is calculated and sensitivity analyses are conducted.

Results

Bivariate Statistics

The bivariate correlations between FTA detention stays and each of the outcome variables, not presented in table form, were statistically significant (official recidivism:

$r = .08, p = .015$, technical recidivism: $r = .32, p < .001$, and re-detainment: $r = .31, p < .001$), suggesting that further investigation is warranted. Chi-square tests and t tests revealed significant differences between the treatment and control groups, suggesting PSM is appropriate for the data. The largest significant mean differences between the treatment and control groups existed for the following covariates: Black, prior felonies, moderate/high risk to reoffend, age at referral for present offense, history of running away, and being arrested for the current offense, with the FTA detention sample more likely to be Black, at moderate/high risk to reoffend, older at the time of referral for the current offense, and have a more extensive history of running away from home. The FTA detention sample was significantly less likely to have prior felonies and be arrested for the current offense. This last fact is particularly critical since, without being arrested and taken to a juvenile assessment center, the youth is less likely to know about his or her court date, and may be less likely to appear in court.

Logistic Regression Assessing the Effect of FTA Detention on Recidivism

The next step in the analysis was to estimate a logistic regression model to determine whether the effects of the FTA detention variable held up in a multivariate context.⁸ As can be seen in the Appendix, the multivariate logistic regressions reveal that FTA detention stays continue to exert a significant effect for all measures of recidivism (odds ratio [OR] = 1.509, $p = .027$ for official recidivism; OR = 4.389, $p < .001$ for technical recidivism; and OR = 4.107, $p < .001$ for re-detainment) even after accounting for the influence of the control variables. This suggests PSM is appropriate for isolating the effect of FTA detention stays as it offers the additional advantage of controlling for selection effects.

Estimating Propensity Scores

Table 2 displays the results from the logistic regression model that was used to estimate propensity scores. The propensity scores reflect each individual's likelihood of being securely detained for failing to appear court. The following covariates significantly increase the likelihood of an FTA detention stay: Black (OR = 3.128), Hispanic (OR = 2.104), moderate risk to reoffend (OR = 3.973), moderate/high risk to reoffend (OR = 15.031), age at referral for the current offense (OR = 1.667), and history of running away (OR = 1.361). Meanwhile, having more prior misdemeanors (OR = 0.687), having more prior felonies (OR = 0.188), being arrested for the current offense (OR = 0.099), and presenting with a nonaggravated battery or assault (OR = 0.479) as the current offense significantly decrease the likelihood of an FTA detention stay.

ATT

The quality of the propensity score match was assessed using t tests to compare the difference of means across covariates as well as by comparing the percent reduction in standard bias as suggested by D'Agostino (1998). The validity of the estimated ATT

Table 2. Logistic Regression Estimating Propensity Scores.

Variable	FTA		
	<i>b</i>	(SE)	OR
Male	0.133	(0.208)	1.143
Black	1.140***	(0.223)	3.128
Hispanic	0.744*	(0.288)	2.104
Other non-White race/ethnicity	0.788	(1.160)	2.200
Prior misdemeanors	-0.375*	(0.156)	0.687
Prior felonies	-1.672***	(0.244)	0.188
Moderate risk	1.380***	(0.327)	3.973
Moderate/high risk	2.710***	(0.610)	15.031
Age at first offense	-0.100	(0.195)	0.908
Age at referral for current offense	0.511***	(0.108)	1.667
Arrested for current offense	-2.313***	(0.258)	0.099
Current household jail history	0.376	(0.207)	1.457
DCF placement	0.262	(0.327)	1.299
Victim of abuse or neglect	0.210	(0.306)	1.234
Current drug use	0.115	(0.245)	1.122
Parent substance use	-0.170	(0.421)	0.843
History of running away	0.308**	(0.107)	1.361
GPA	-0.114	(0.097)	0.892
Habitual truancy	0.142	(0.364)	1.152
History of depression	0.055	(0.223)	1.057
Mental health problems	0.043	(0.272)	1.044
Gang member or affiliate	0.036	(0.613)	1.036
Delinquent peers	0.083	(0.207)	1.087
Prosocial peers	0.564	(0.293)	1.757
Alcohol or drug offense	0.310	(0.326)	1.364
Misdemeanor other/sex offense	0.642*	(0.290)	1.900
Petit larceny	0.736**	(0.248)	2.088
Trespassing	0.085	(0.394)	1.088
Vandalism	0.348	(0.460)	1.416
Weapon offense	0.063	(0.809)	1.065
Circuit 1 disposition	-2.468***	(0.505)	0.085
Circuit 2 disposition	-2.949***	(0.691)	0.052
Circuit 4 disposition	-1.155**	(0.412)	0.315
Circuit 5 disposition	-3.188***	(0.545)	0.041
Circuit 6 disposition	-2.368***	(0.625)	0.094
Circuit 7 disposition	-2.748***	(0.490)	0.064
Circuit 8 disposition	-3.812***	(0.657)	0.022
Circuit 9 disposition	-1.915***	(0.417)	0.147
Circuit 10 disposition	-2.450***	(0.452)	0.086
Circuit 11 disposition	-1.010*	(0.422)	0.364

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Variable	FTA		
	<i>b</i>	(SE)	OR
Circuit 12 disposition	-1.793**	(0.673)	0.166
Circuit 14 disposition	-3.690***	(0.752)	0.025
Circuit 15 disposition	-2.511***	(0.683)	0.081
Circuit 17 disposition	-1.174**	(0.396)	0.309
Circuit 18 disposition	-2.776***	(0.741)	0.062
Circuit 19 disposition	-2.748***	(0.510)	0.064
Circuit 20 disposition	-1.026*	(0.459)	0.358
Constant	-2.954*	(1.466)	0.052

Note. Entries represent unstandardized regression coefficients (*b*), robust standard errors (SE), and odds ratios (OR). *N* = 857 (340 FTA youth; 517 probation youth). FTA = failure to appear; DCF = department of children and families; GPA = grade point average.

p* < .05, two-tailed test. *p* < .01, two-tailed test. ****p* < .001, two-tailed test.

relies on the assumption that all potential confounders are balanced after matching (Wolff et al., 2014). Prior to matching, 21 variables were significantly different between the FTA detention and probation samples. However, as can be seen in Table 3, *t* tests revealed that there were no significant differences in the mean values of any of the covariates between the two groups after matching. These results suggest that selection biases from the covariates included in the model were successfully eliminated.

As shown in Table 4, the estimated ATT was significant at the .05 level for official recidivism (ATT = 0.085) and at the .001 level for both technical recidivism (ATT = 0.280) and re-detainment (ATT = 0.268). Although the magnitude of the estimated ATT for official recidivism is small, it is nontrivial, suggesting that for the average youth in the treatment group, an FTA detention stay increases the probability of official recidivism by 8.5 percentage points. The results for the other two measures suggest that, for the average youth in the treatment group, an FTA detention stay increases the probability of technical recidivism by 28 percentage points and the probability of re-detainment by 26.8 percentage points. Put simply, youth are significantly more likely to recidivate if they experienced an FTA detention stay rather than remaining in the community.

Sensitivity Analyses

To ensure the findings are real and robust, a series of sensitivity analyses were conducted. First, following prior research (Wermink et al., 2010), we assessed the level of hidden bias in the average treatment effects using Becker and Caliendo's (2007) *mhbounds* command in Stata 13. The reason bias checks are so crucial to PSM is because the method relies on an untestable assumption of unconfoundedness which, if

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Balance Statistics for Matched Samples.

Variable	Before matching			After matching		
	FTA youth (n = 340)	Probation youth (n = 517)	Mean difference	FTA youth (n = 340)	Probation youth (n = 517)	Mean difference
	M	M	t test	M	M	t test
Male	0.635	0.694	1.80	0.637	0.660	0.61
Black	0.588	0.466	3.52***	0.590	0.537	1.39
Hispanic	0.153	0.145	0.32	0.153	0.180	0.93
Other non-White	0.006	0.004	0.42	0.006	0.002	0.72
Prior misdemeanors	1.585	1.441	3.05**	1.587	1.505	1.52
Prior felonies	1.215	1.348	3.73***	1.215	1.189	0.75
Moderate risk	0.170	0.102	2.91**	0.171	0.130	1.48
Moderate/high risk	0.076	0.015	4.52***	0.077	0.051	1.38
Age at first offense	1.806	1.722	2.06*	1.808	1.821	0.28
Age at referral for current offense	14.038	13.594	5.86***	14.044	13.957	1.11
Arrested for current offense	0.547	0.741	5.99***	0.546	0.486	1.57
Current household jail history	0.347	0.251	3.03**	0.348	0.313	0.96
DCF placement	0.118	0.081	1.77	0.118	0.088	1.29
Victim of abuse or neglect	0.141	0.087	2.50*	0.142	0.103	1.52
Current drug use	0.297	0.207	3.02**	0.298	0.275	0.66
Parent substance use	0.059	0.052	2.90	0.059	0.032	1.66
History of running away	1.659	1.246	6.15***	1.661	1.563	1.07
GPA	2.438	2.640	2.90**	2.434	2.461	0.35
Habitual truancy	0.118	0.056	3.26**	0.118	0.077	1.82
History of depression	0.306	0.255	1.62	0.307	0.265	1.21
Mental health problems	0.165	0.176	0.43	0.165	0.151	0.50
Gang member or affiliate	0.035	0.014	2.12*	0.035	0.018	1.38
Delinquent peers	0.718	0.638	2.42*	0.717	0.716	0.02
Prosocial peers	0.894	0.870	1.04	0.894	0.875	0.77
Alcohol or drug offense	0.153	0.137	0.64	0.153	0.175	0.75
Misdemeanor other/ sex offense	0.174	0.118	2.30*	0.174	0.138	1.29

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Variable	Before matching			After matching		
	FTA youth (n = 340)	Probation youth (n = 517)	Mean difference	FTA youth (n = 340)	Probation youth (n = 517)	Mean difference
	M	M	t test	M	M	t test
Petit larceny	0.268	0.232	1.18	0.268	0.249	0.58
Trespassing	0.059	0.085	1.43	0.059	0.065	0.32
Vandalism	0.032	0.058	1.72	0.032	0.016	1.34
Weapon offense	0.009	0.019	1.23	0.009	0.007	0.26
Circuit 1 disposition	0.032	0.087	3.18**	0.032	0.011	1.89
Circuit 2 disposition	0.018	0.027	0.89	0.018	0.005	1.51
Circuit 4 disposition	0.076	0.095	0.93	0.077	0.056	1.08
Circuit 5 disposition	0.029	0.064	2.26*	0.030	0.036	0.52
Circuit 6 disposition	0.041	0.023	1.50	0.041	0.024	1.25
Circuit 7 disposition	0.056	0.056	0.01	0.056	0.058	0.10
Circuit 8 disposition	0.018	0.041	1.89	0.018	0.011	0.78
Circuit 9 disposition	0.129	0.102	1.22	0.130	0.142	0.47
Circuit 10 disposition	0.065	0.097	1.65	0.065	0.047	1.00
Circuit 11 disposition	0.097	0.052	2.52*	0.097	0.129	1.31
Circuit 12 disposition	0.024	0.014	1.09	0.024	0.023	0.05
Circuit 14 disposition	0.015	0.021	0.69	0.015	0.013	0.20
Circuit 15 disposition	0.015	0.029	1.36	0.015	0.006	1.05
Circuit 17 disposition	0.100	0.070	1.59	0.100	0.123	0.95
Circuit 18 disposition	0.012	0.033	1.96	0.012	0.010	0.22
Circuit 19 disposition	0.032	0.070	2.35*	0.030	0.030	0.00
Circuit 20 disposition	0.056	0.046	0.62	0.056	0.085	1.47

Note. FTA = failure to appear; DCF = department of child and families; GPA = grade point average.
 *p < .05, two-tailed test. **p < .01, two-tailed test. ***p < .001, two-tailed test.

not met, invalidates the results (Loughran et al., 2015).⁹ *Mhbounds* provides one way of estimating the degree to which this assumption holds. The results of this sensitivity analysis can be seen in the rightmost column of Table 4. The gamma statistic (Γ) can be interpreted as an odds ratio, meaning that two individuals with the same observed

Table 4. ATT and Sensitivity Analysis.

Outcome	ATT	(SE)	Critical level of hidden bias (Γ)
Official recidivism	0.085*	(0.040)	1.15 - 1.20
Technical recidivism	0.280***	(0.043)	3.10 - 3.15
Subsequent detainment	0.268***	(0.041)	2.90 - 2.95

Note. ATT = average treatment effect on the treated.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed test. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed test.

covariates would differ in their odds of receiving the treatment based on unobservable characteristics by a factor of Γ (Loughran et al., 2015).

The estimated gamma for the official recidivism model ranged between 1.15 and 1.20. This means that, if a matched pair of treated and control individuals are identical on all observed covariates, the treated cases would have to be more than 1.2 times as likely as their matched control to engage in official recidivism due to unmeasured confounders to reverse the conclusion that FTA detention stays increase the probability of official recidivism by 8.5 percentage points. The estimated gammas for the technical recidivism ($\Gamma = 3.10-3.15$) and re-detainment models ($\Gamma = 2.90-2.95$) suggest they are insensitive to a bias that would triple and double the odds, respectively, of being securely detained for an FTA. Overall, these analyses suggest that the estimated ATTs are relatively insensitive to hidden bias from omitted covariates. Taken together, the results show that FTA detention stays increase recidivism and subsequent detention stays for low-risk youth.

Discussion

Despite increasing support for an ideological shift back toward the less punitive, more rehabilitative focus of the juvenile justice system (Blevins, Cullen, & Sundt, 2007; Mendel, 2014; Moon, Sundt, Cullen, & Wright, 2000), remnants of the “get tough” movement are still readily apparent today (Benekos & Merlo, 2008; Duriez, Cullen, & Manchak, 2014; Pratt, 2009). Such practices are concerning because research overwhelmingly finds them to be harmful to youths’ mental, physical, educational, and prosocial well-being (Cullen, Jonson, & Nagin, 2011; Petictlerc, Gatti, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2012; Teplin et al., 2015). By examining the effects of detaining youth for failing to appear in court, the purpose of this study was to determine whether exposing low-risk youth to confinement by the juvenile justice system made them more likely to recidivate or experience subsequent confinement than had they not been detained and were allowed to await their court date in the community. Based on our findings, three broad conclusions are warranted.

First, our results suggest that low-risk youth who are detained for failing to appear in court experience criminogenic consequences. Although the effects of FTA detention were robust across all forms of recidivism, we found a weaker relationship between FTA detention stays and adjudication for a new offense (i.e., “official recidivism”)

than for technical recidivism and re-detainment. These latter forms of recidivism are unique in that they are based heavily on the discretion of juvenile court actors, namely, probation officers and judges. To be sure, juvenile court judges have far more discretion than adult court judges to recommend alternatives to detention (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2015), and juvenile probation officers typically have the sole authority to decide whether to formally file a technical violation for youth on probation.

Our findings therefore suggest that knowledge of an FTA detention does not elicit a restorative, educative, or rehabilitative response from juvenile court actors—instead, judges and probation officers seem to respond more punitively to youth with an FTA. These findings are consistent with prior studies that document how even short-term incarceration stints can lead to the more severe treatment of youth in the juvenile justice system (Frazier & Cochran, 1986; Feld, 1993; Rodriguez, 2010). Still, it is unknown whether these more punitive responses from court actors tend to be emotionally charged, or based on a rational legal calculus. For instance, it is possible that judges and probation officers view youth who have been detained previously as more blameworthy and a greater threat to public safety (Bridges & Steen, 1998; Harris, 2009; Steffensmeier, Ulmer, & Kramer, 1998); and it is also possible that the knowledge of an FTA detention elicits feelings of anger and frustration among judges and probation officers in ways that affect their decision making (Maroney, 2012), especially toward minority youth (Leiber & Fox, 2005; Lieber & Johnson, 2008). Research that can better identify how FTA detention stays affect court actors' perceptions of youth—perhaps through the use of qualitative interviews with judges and probation officers (e.g., Clair & Winter, 2016; Steffensmeier, Kramer, & Streifel, 1993)—will be particularly useful as this line of work continues.

Second, although the focus of the present study was on recidivism and re-detainment, prior research suggests that a host of other negative outcomes may be exacerbated by exposure to confinement. Future studies should build upon our findings by examining related adverse consequences of confinement such as deteriorations of mental and physical health, weakened decision-making skills and commitment to conventional values, neurological deficits, and setbacks in educational attainment and prosocial relations. Better understanding these adverse outcomes is important as they may help explain why FTA detention stays increase recidivism/re-detainment. This is particularly concerning for minority youth as they face disproportional rates of confinement (Bishop et al., 2010; Leiber, 1994; Piquero, 2008) and are more likely to experience FTA detention stays. We echo previous suggestions (Garland et al., 2016) that subjective accounts of youth's experiences in detention centers will be critical to identifying the underlying mechanisms through which these adverse consequences arise.

One possible mechanism is that being detained may alter youth's perception of procedural legitimacy and respect for legal authority. These changes in perceived legitimacy will affect the youth's subsequent behavior (Tyler, 2006). Youth who are detained for failing to appear in court for a misdemeanor charge may perceive this justice system response as overly punitive and come to view the system and its actors

as unfair and thus unworthy of respect. Prior research on juvenile perceptions of law enforcement officials suggest that youth are less likely than adults to hold favorable attitudes toward police (Hurst & Frank, 2000; Taylor, Turner, Esbensen, & Winfree, 2001) and this perception may be exacerbated by something as simple as unsolicited contact with a law enforcement official (Gau & Brunson, 2010; Leiber, Nalla, & Farnworth, 1998). If experiencing confinement causes youth to change their perception of the justice system's legitimacy, this would decrease the likelihood that youth would willingly comply with law enforcement requests and court orders in the future. This would simultaneously increase the likelihood that law enforcement officials would perceive the youth as uncooperative and willingly defiant of the court's wishes. In this way, changes in perceived legitimacy may account for the relationship between juvenile justice system involvement and subsequent recidivism, a possibility which should be explored in future research.

Third, our findings carry important implications for juvenile justice policy and practice, and suggest that low-risk juvenile offenders should not be held in detention centers for failing to appear in court. Aside from the impact on recidivism/re-detainment, locking kids up for not appearing at their court date likely does little to address the reasons why they failed to show up in the first place. Prior research shows that youth caught up in the juvenile justice system often come from homes characterized by family dysfunction, fighting, instability, and a lack of family cohesiveness (Rodriguez, Smith, & Zatz, 2009; Tarolla, Wagner, Rabinowitz, & Tubman, 2002), where youth tend to feel "neglected by parents perceived as 'absent'" due to incarceration, drug use, or working long hours (Barnert et al., 2015, p. 1366). As minors, juvenile offenders are often reliant upon their parents and other family members to inform them of their court date, and to transport and accompany them to their scheduled court appearance. In these types of circumstances, family members may be unwilling or unable to arrange transportation for the youth, or may simply be unaware of the youth's court date if notifications were only attempted through the mail or by phone.

Two alternative methods for diverting youth who fail to appear from detention are the use of catch and release warrants, and the use of evening reporting centers—both of which involve continued interactions with juvenile justice staff (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). Specifically, catch and release warrants require a juvenile probation officer to physically contact the juvenile after an FTA, discuss ways to ensure the behavior does not happen again, and then release the youth back to the community. Evening reporting centers are nonresidential alternatives to secure detention that offer an array of support, services, and activities to youth. These reporting centers can vary by jurisdiction, but they generally require youth to spend a few hours after school participating in a variety of programs at a location staffed by juvenile justice employees.

Increased interactions with juvenile justice staff via catch and release warrants or evening reporting centers can afford two distinct advantages. First, the youth and his or her family are able to be reminded, in-person, about the youth's next court date, and any barriers to the youth attending (e.g., transportation concerns) can be addressed prior to the court date. Second, the continued interactions allow for rapport to build

between the youth and the juvenile justice system. Rather than viewing the juvenile justice system as a removed, disciplinary entity, the youth can put an empathic face to the sanctions they are receiving, and perhaps even come to understand why the system functions as it does. Prior research consistently finds that when offenders view the justice system's reaction to their offense as fair, they are less likely to reoffend and more likely to comply with the conditions of their sanction (Tyler, 2006). Greater use of evening reporting centers and catch and release warrants may accomplish these goals, but future research is needed to assess whether this is indeed the case (Garland et al., 2016).

In the end, our study provides additional support to the notion that getting tough on kids—especially on low-risk kids—is not a good idea (Andrews et al., 1990; Lipsey, Wilson, & Cothorn, 2000). Youth involved with the juvenile justice system are disproportionately enmeshed in a network of educational, familial, traumatic, epidemiological, and financial hardships (Lambie & Randell, 2013). It is therefore unlikely that any strictly punitive sanction such as detention would sufficiently improve the well-being of young offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Henggeler, Melton, & Smith, 1992). The problems these youth face are multifaceted and thus, so should be the juvenile justice system's response to their behavior. We encourage future research to continue to examine the efficacy of existing juvenile justice practices to develop effective, evidence-based policies that do not result in further harms to young offenders.

Appendix

Multivariate Logistic Regression Models Assessing the Impact of FTA Detention on Each Form of Recidivism.

Variable	Official recidivism	Technical recidivism	Subsequent detainment
	OR	OR	OR
FTA detention stay	1.509*	4.389***	4.107***
Male	1.984***	1.583*	2.781***
Black	1.763**	2.503***	2.391***
Hispanic	0.964	1.337	1.002
Other non-White race/ethnicity	5.180	0.609	2.859
Prior misdemeanors	1.701***	1.528**	1.560**
Prior felonies	1.649*	1.388	1.024
Moderate risk	0.494*	0.587	0.882
Moderate/high risk	0.647	0.780	1.063
Age at first offense	0.847	0.680*	0.763
Age at referral for current offense	0.904	1.166	0.868
Arrested for current offense	1.163	1.349	0.821
Current household jail history	1.102	0.997	0.886

(continued)

Appendix. (continued)

Variable	Official recidivism	Technical recidivism	Subsequent detainment
	OR	OR	OR
DCF placement	1.152	1.774	0.888
Victim of abuse or neglect	0.897	0.539*	0.922
Current drug use	1.429	2.237**	1.993**
Parent substance use	1.292	0.749	1.707
History of running away	1.312**	1.632***	1.539***
GPA	0.807*	0.735**	0.792*
Habitual truancy	1.132	1.225	0.938
History of depression	0.748	0.857	0.882
Mental health problems	1.568*	1.880*	2.131**
Gang member or affiliate	0.981	1.560	1.250
Delinquent peers	1.342	1.685**	1.563*
Prosocial peers	0.663	0.595	0.820
Alcohol or drug offense	1.239	0.862	1.167
Misdemeanor other/sex offense	1.428	1.959*	1.365
Petit larceny	0.988	1.012	0.968
Trespassing	1.412	1.020	2.248*
Vandalism	0.970	1.504	1.429
Weapon offense	2.366	0.904	1.316
Circuit 1 disposition	2.418*	2.830*	3.254**
Circuit 2 disposition	1.376	0.558	0.921
Circuit 4 disposition	0.944	1.192	0.922
Circuit 5 disposition	1.222	1.062	1.114
Circuit 6 disposition	0.612	0.717	0.672
Circuit 7 disposition	1.134	1.625	1.084
Circuit 8 disposition	1.448	0.848	1.020
Circuit 9 disposition	1.018	1.083	0.935
Circuit 10 disposition	1.012	1.412	0.796
Circuit 11 disposition	0.923	0.773	1.382
Circuit 12 disposition	0.351	1.016	0.883
Circuit 14 disposition	1.618	1.681	0.995
Circuit 15 disposition	2.865	2.108	1.210
Circuit 17 disposition	1.397	0.652	0.938
Circuit 18 disposition	1.352	2.532	1.490
Circuit 19 disposition	1.209	1.522	1.062
Circuit 20 disposition	1.555	0.606	0.860
Constant	0.330	0.014**	0.587
Pseudo R ²	.111	.218	.216

Note. N = 857 (340 FTA youth; 517 probation youth). FTA = failure to appear; OR = odds ratio; DCF = department of child and families; GPA = grade point average.

* $p < .05$, two-tailed test. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed test. *** $p < .001$, two-tailed test.

Authors' Note

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank Travis Pratt for his helpful comments on a previous draft.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. The following were included as failure to appear (FTA)-related charges: Pick-Up Order Failure to Appear, Failure to Appear for Felony Offense, Failure to Appear for Misdemeanor Offense, Failure to Appear Written Promise to Appear, Failure to Appear—Failure to Respond to Game Officer's Citation, Failure to Appear—In Court Violation of Fish & Game Rules, Failure to Appear Child Fail to Appear at Court Hearing, and Failure to Appear—Respond to Boating Citation.
2. We use information from Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) screenings that occurred prior to the issuance of either the FTA pick-up order (in the treatment group) or probation (in the control group) to ensure that the covariates measured could not possibly have been affected by the FTA decision or the time spent on probation.
3. The offense date of the recidivating offense was used to determine whether the offense occurred within 2 years of release from detention/probation. Therefore, court processing time is not included in this follow-up period.
4. Risk to reoffend is measured categorically by the PACT and largely determined by the youth's prior offending history. These categories were dichotomized (high, moderate/high, moderate, and low), and because low risk to reoffend was the most common (83% of the sample), this was used as the reference category. There were 11 high-risk cases which were eliminated because there was no variation on the treatment variable (all were in the FTA detention sample).
5. Cases from Judicial Circuits 3 and 16 were eliminated from the analysis because they included no variation on the treatment variable. (There were three cases from Judicial Circuit 3, all belonging to the probation sample and one case from Judicial Circuit 16 which was in the FTA detention sample.)
6. Youth not currently enrolled in school ($N = 29$) were coded as grade point average (GPA) = 0, habitual truancy = 0.
7. Supplementary analyses were conducted using a 0.045 caliper and a 6:1 nearest neighbor matching algorithm, and using a categorical risk variable which allowed the 11 high-risk youth who were eliminated from the current sample to be retained. The findings were substantively identical to those presented here. *Mhbounds* sensitivity analysis suggested the 0.034 caliper, 5:1 nearest neighbor algorithm was slightly less sensitive to hidden bias than

- the 0.045 caliper, 6:1 nearest neighbor option, and is thus the superior choice. Additional alternative matching algorithms and caliper settings were attempted, but proved to be a poor fit for the data, either eliminating a large proportion of cases or resulting in imbalance between the groups even after matching.
8. Model diagnostics were conducted to determine whether collinearity would bias the parameter estimates. The variance inflation factors (VIFs) are below the standard “conservative” cutoff of 4.0 (Fox, 1991). None of the remaining correlation coefficients exceeded an absolute value of .54. These results indicate that harmful collinearity is not a concern for the regression models presented in the Appendix.
 9. The unconfoundedness assumption states that, “after adjusting for observable differences in pre-treatment characteristics using techniques such as matching, sub-classification, or weighting, treated and control units become comparable not for measured but unmeasured potential confounders” (Loughran, Wilson, Nagin, & Piquero, 2015, p. 633).

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