

**California's Juvenile Probation Camps:
Summary**

Camps, Ranches, and Schools Study

State of California
Department of the Youth Authority
Research Division
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By

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SUMMARY

At the request of the Chief Probation Officers of California, the California Youth Authority (CYA) conducted a descriptive and evaluative study of all 3,774 youths who resided in the 53 juvenile probation camps operating in mid-1984. Case files, court records, Bureau of Criminal Statistics rapsheets, a survey completed by camp staff, and phone follow-ups were used. For comparative purposes, 2,113 randomly selected field probationers, court-ordered private placements, and juvenile hall commitments were also studied, as were 1,021 Youth Authority wards. Main results are as follows:

- Probation camps serve youths who have a wide range of personal or social adjustment problems, and many of these youths have multiple problems. These problems include alcohol, drugs, psychiatric/psychological difficulties, gang involvement, weapons use, and physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Many camp youths may need multiple services to assist with those problems and with related environmental pressures.
- Camp youths are more seriously delinquent than field probationers, private placements, and those committed to juvenile halls, but they are less delinquent than individuals committed to the Youth Authority.
- Probation camps offer a wide range of programs and activities, including academic and vocational training, counseling, recreation, and religion. Also, youths' time in camps is generally followed by several months of aftercare, often on reduced or specialized caseloads.
- Camps provide immediate public protection by incapacitating youths—removing them from the community—for an average of 5.5 months. During that time, 9% of camp youths escape; more specifically, they usually walk away or do not return from furlough.
- Eighty-two percent of camp youths successfully complete their camp program and the remaining 18% are removed as unsuccessful or are transferred.
- Of all youths admitted to camp (males and females combined), 35% had no known sustained petitions, or convictions, for at least 24 months after successful completion or unsatisfactory removal/transfer; 71% are not committed to the Youth Authority

or the Department of Corrections during that 24 month period. Conversely, 65% re-offend and 29% are committed to the state. (Throughout this report, "offense" refers to a sustained petition in juvenile court or a conviction in adult court.)

- Of all males who satisfactorily complete their camp program, 38% commit no offenses for at least 24 months after camp release, and 74% are not committed to a state institution during that time. Conversely, 62% of male, satisfactory program completers re-offend and 26% are committed to the state.
- Of all males who do not successfully complete their camp program, the rates of offending and state commitment are substantially higher than those of satisfactory completers. The rates of offending and state commitment are 88% and 50% respectively, at 24 months follow-up. Like the rates for males who satisfactorily complete their camp program, these may reflect the substantial, pre-camp difficulties of many youths, and their post-camp environmental pressures as well.
- For males who satisfactorily complete their camp program, violent offending is reduced 54% during the 24 months after camp release as compared to the 24 months preceding camp. Sixteen percent of all males—successful and unsuccessful completers combined—commit a violent offense within 24 months after camp release. The presence of pre-camp violence does not reliably predict the presence of post-camp violence; nor does the absence of pre-camp violence reliably predict the absence of post-camp violence.
- In sum, 24 months after release for males who satisfactorily complete their camp program:
 - 38% commit no known offense,
 - 74% are not committed to a state institution, and
 - 84% commit no violent offense.On the other hand,
 - 62% reoffend,
 - 26% are committed to a state institution, and
 - 16% commit a violent offense.
- Performance measures such as offending after camp release and the reduction in offending from pre-camp to post-camp mainly focused on public protection. This study did not obtain direct measures of personal and interpersonal change or adjustment, such as changes in psychological, attitudinal, and achievement test scores, or in post-camp employment history.

- Because the study was not a controlled experiment—in which, for example, youths were randomly assigned to either field probation, camp, or the Youth Authority—it was not possible to determine if youths who would routinely be sent to camp would have performed better or worse in terms of recidivism if they had instead been either placed on field probation—that is, in a community setting—or sent to the Youth Authority.
- By comparing camps with each other, several sets of camp features were found to be associated with sizable differences in recidivism and state commitment among males: For all satisfactory program completers combined, these differences were usually 20 to 30%, and for some risk groups within the sample, they were often larger.
- If camps that currently have few of the features associated with lower recidivism and lower state commitment rates could adopt more of them, their recidivism and commitment rates could be expected to decrease. These findings regarding effective combinations of camp features are being validated against a second set of camp youths in order to ensure their reliability and their stability through time.

In conclusion, camps provide considerable immediate as well as longer-term public protection with regard to youths who are often repeat offenders and whose communities feel should be incarcerated. The present study suggested possible ways to increase the amount of protection camps can provide.

BACKGROUND

Probation plays a major role within the juvenile justice system. For instance, of the 230,000 juvenile arrests in California in 1988, some 162,000 resulted in referrals to probation and almost one-third of these led to placement on formal probation. In California, probation is operated at the county level. Though most juvenile probationers successfully complete probation, a small portion—6% in 1988—are sent to the state-operated Department of the Youth Authority, usually after having failed on probation. Probation's large role in the juvenile justice system can be seen from the fact that, in 1988, there were 53,000 youths under formal probation supervision in institutions as well as the community. This overshadowed the Youth Authority's 1988 average institutional and parole population of 13,000 (Information Systems Bureau, 1989).

Most juvenile probationers are supervised within the community, in noninstitutional settings. However, probation camps, which are institutional settings, are responsible for many youths. In 1988, for instance, California's juvenile probation camps had an average daily population of 3,750, 29% more than in 1980 (Wedge, 1989; Walker, 1988). Youths are committed to probation after the courts have determined that their offense or pattern of offenses is unacceptable to or a threat to the community, and that the youth should not remain in the community. As a result, a commitment to these camps is often the last local alternative preceding a decision to commit a juvenile to the Youth Authority. In 1988, there were 13,000 commitments to probation camps (Wedge, 1989). Without these facilities, admissions to Youth Authority institutions would almost certainly increase.

There is no legal mandate for the operation of these camps, and fiscal constraints have challenged the existence of some camps. Together with a desire to increase knowledge about probation camps, this challenge was a major

reason for the Chief Probation Officers' of California (CPOC) having asked the Youth Authority, in 1983, to design and implement a study of juvenile camps that would provide information both to decision makers and the public in general. It was believed that to optimally utilize these camp resources, a systematic, up-to-date description and an objective assessment would be useful. To achieve these ends—and since no recent comprehensive data on California's probation camps existed in these respects—Youth Authority researchers, together with an advisory committee appointed by the CPOC, established the following goals:

1. Describe the youths who are served by camps and describe the main features of those facilities, including program and staff.
2. Compare the camps' youth population with other justice system populations: field probationers; juvenile hall commitments; private placements; and institutionalized Youth Authority wards.
3. Study camp effectiveness with respect to, but not limited to, recidivism.

The present study was conducted as a joint undertaking by the Youth Authority and CPOC and produced five reports (Palmer & Wedge, 1985, 1989; Domingo-Llacuna, Knight, & Palmer, 1985; Wedge & Palmer, 1986, 1989). The methods used in this study are described in connection with each goal.

FINDINGS

Description of Youths and Camps

Method. The Camps, Ranches, and Schools Study's first objective was accomplished using data from case files, court records, and other official documents to describe several demographic, offense-related, and personal/social characteristics of 3,774 youths residing in all 53 county camps that were operating in mid-1984. This is not a sample, but is instead a census of all youths in those facilities on July 20 of that year. Seventeen of the 53 camps were in Los Angeles County.

Camp youths. All youths were Welfare & Institution Code 602 (penal code violation) wards; 93% were males; and their average age at admission was 15.7. One-third of the youths were white and two-thirds were minorities; about one-fourth were middle class but most were of lower socioeconomic status. Six percent of the youths were committed by courts in counties that did not operate their own camps.

The study found that, although most offenses were property crimes and typical offense histories were relatively short (averaging 1.5 sustained petitions), 26% of the youths had violent commitment offenses and 22% had violent priors. Moreover, commitment offenses were twice as likely to be violent among youths in Los Angeles County camps than among those in camps located within the remainder of the state. Finally, the study found that camp youths—collectively—had a wide range of adjustment problems and that many youths—individually—may have needed multiple services to assist with those problems. For instance, many youths had been involved with drugs (49%), alcohol (33%), gangs (34%), or weapons (26%). Many had had at least one out-of-home placement (18%), dependency contact (14%), or prior institutional placement (30%); and most (70%) were academically below grade level. Fifteen percent had known histories of psychological/psychiatric difficulties and 13% had reported histories of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse (see Figure 1).

Location and design. A survey of camps found them to be about evenly divided between urban or suburban and rural or mountain settings. The average population in a camp was 62, and it ranged from less than 20 to over 100. Most camps were open, rather than fenced or otherwise secure, and most housed their youths in dorms rather than single or double rooms (see Figure 2).

Program components. Almost all camps had several program components (see Table 1). Typically, youths spent most of their time in academic training, recreational activities, off-grounds activities, and work detail. Except in many camps for older youths, less time was spent in vocational training. All

Characteristics

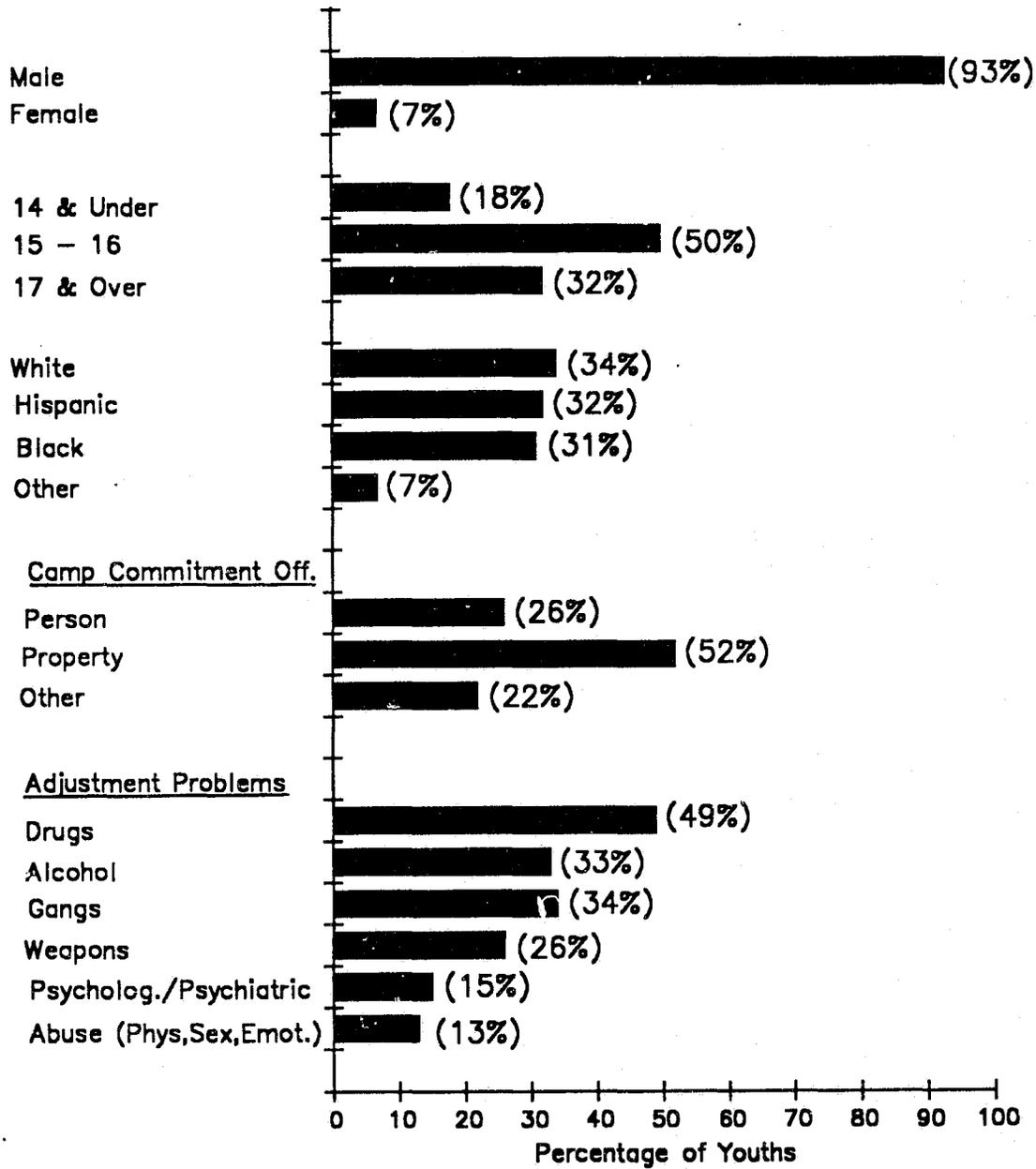


FIGURE 1
 Characteristics of Youths in California's
 53 Probation Camps

Features

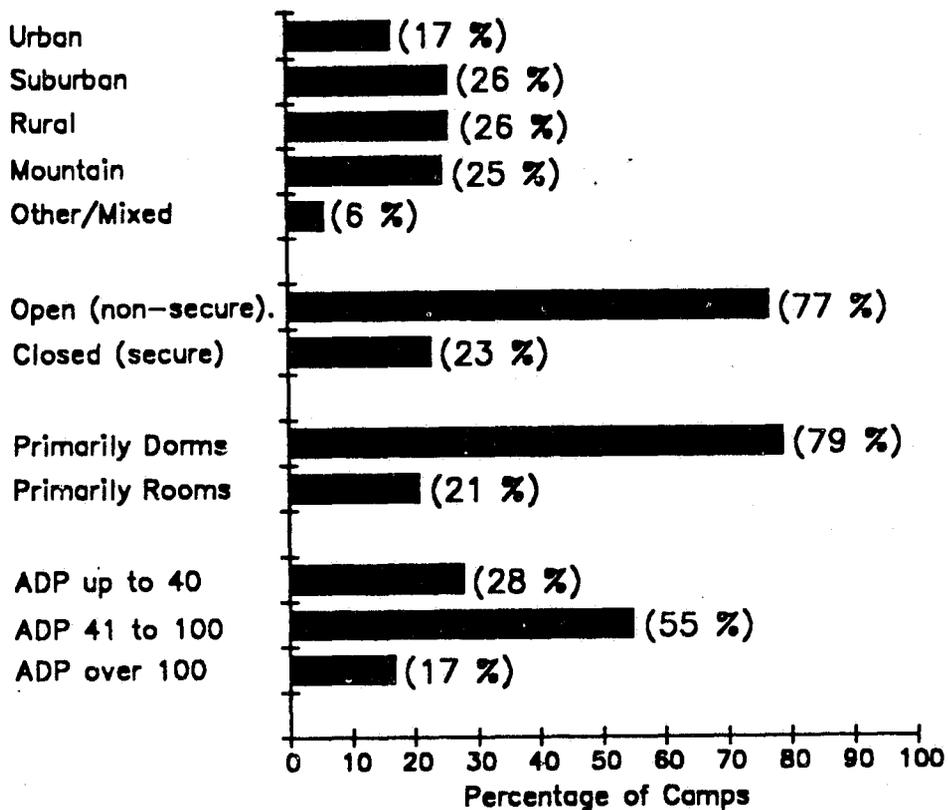


FIGURE 2

General Features of California's 53 Probation Camps

TABLE 1

Participation in Program Components

Component	Pct. of Youths Who Participate During Camp Stay	Avg. Weekly Hours Per Participant
Counseling/Casework	100	4
Academic Training	99	21
Recreational Activity	99	15
Work Details	95	13
Contacts from Outside (e.g., parents)	87	5
Off-grounds Activity	64	14
Religious Activity	52	2
Vocational Training	43	9

youths had some counseling each week. The question of whether these program components—taken together—allowed camps to focus on the specific problems or needs of most youths as individuals was beyond the scope of the study.

The average youth's length of stay was approximately 6 months, though much variation existed across camps. For instance, about 25% of the camp programs lasted 4 months or less; some 30% were 4.1 to 6 months; about 40% were 6.1 to 8 months; and the remaining few were 8.1 to 10 months. Most camps provided about six months of intensive aftercare supervision, which involved reduced or specialized caseloads; and the typical intensive caseload was not much smaller than a standard caseload. The average camp had 43 staff (mainly full time), and the average ratio of staff-to-youths for all work shifts combined was about 1 to 1.5. To help implement or supplement basic program activities, nearly all camps used volunteers. Typically, there were 23 volunteers per camp per month, with each donating about 10 hours a month.

Detailed descriptions of the camp population and camp features were presented in project reports No. 1 and No. 2 (Palmer & Wedge, 1985; Domingo-Llacuna, Knight, & Palmer, 1985).

Comparison of Youth Populations

The study's second objective was achieved by first comparing the 3,774 camp youths with randomly selected field probationers, juvenile hall commitments, and court-ordered private placements—2,113 W&I Code 602 wards on formal probation in 1984 from the same counties that operated the 53 camps.

- Age and gender of camp youths was about the same as other groups, except for private placements, who tended to be noticeably younger and more often female.
- Camps, followed by juvenile halls, had the highest percentage of ethnic minorities.
- Of the four probation groups, camp youths were generally the most delinquent; juvenile hall commitments were second; and field probationers were the least delinquent.

These comparisons regarding delinquency were based on such measures as number of prior sustained petitions, number of prior institutional placements, and current as well as prior violent offenses. The differences between camp youths and field probationers in degree of delinquency probably reflected the fact that, in 1984, camp youths comprised only 5% of California's total formal juvenile probation population, while field probationers were the vast majority.

Using the same measures, camp youths were also compared with a sample of 1,021 institutionalized first commitments to the Youth Authority from juvenile court who were under 18 at admission.

- Camp youths were slightly younger at admission.
- Camp youths contained slightly fewer ethnic minorities.
- Youth Authority wards were considerably more delinquent: Twice as high a percentage had a prior institutional placement and a violent commitment offense.
- Youth Authority wards averaged about twice as many prior sustained petitions.

Thus, although camp youths generally had the most delinquent background of all probationer groups, they were considerably less delinquently involved than most Youth Authority wards. The comparison of camp youths with these juvenile justice populations was described in project report No. 3 (Wedge & Palmer, 1986).

Camp Effectiveness

The third and most complex goal was to "study camp effectiveness with respect to, but not limited to, recidivism." Again using official documents—such as court records and Bureau of Criminal Statistics rapsheets—2,835 W&I Code 602's on formal probation who had been released or removed from the probation camps in 1982 were followed up from point of release or removal.¹ "Release" basically refers to a satisfactory program completion and "removal"

signifies an unsatisfactory termination.² Eighty-two percent of the sample satisfactorily completed their camp program; 18% had an unsatisfactory termination (8% were escapes and 10% were disciplinary transfers). These 2,835 individuals were a chronologically selected random sample of all youths released or removed from those camps, and each camp that contributed to the sample was proportionately represented with regard to its total yearly releases. Pre-camp vs. post-camp psychological and achievement test-scores, post-camp employment history, self-reports regarding delinquent activities, and other possible indices of camp, community, and personal-social change or adjustment were either nonexistent or unavailable for use as additional effectiveness measures.

As seen in Table 2, 54% of all youths recidivated within 12 months and 65% recidivated within 24 months. (Thirty-nine percent had recidivated within 6 months.) For youths who satisfactorily completed their camp program the recidivism rate at 24-months follow-up was 60%; for those not completing their program (unsatisfactory removals) it was 88%. All recidivism rates were higher for males than for females. Recidivism was defined as a sustained petition in juvenile court or a conviction in adult court.

Of the 3,321 offenses committed during the 24-months follow-up, property crimes accounted for 40%, technical violations (often placement failures) for 15%, substance abuse 9%, and violent offenses 16%. Fifteen percent of the sample had one or more violent offenses during the follow-up.

Youths with the highest recidivism rates were (a) those who scored high on a recidivism-risk scale developed during this study, (b) those age 14 or less at camp admission, (c) those with three or more prior (pre-camp) sustained petitions, and (d) those with one or more prior institutional commitments. Recidivism risk (higher, medium, lower) was based on a statistically derived scale whose three components were age at first sustained petition, number of prior sustained petitions, and number of prior

institutional commitments. Previous research has frequently shown these three variables to be related to rate of recidivism. In combination, these pre-camp factors predicted recidivism for 24-months post-camp follow-up better than other combinations of factors. Figure 3 displays recidivism rates at four follow-up periods for camp youths in lower, medium, and higher risk groups. Sizable differences in recidivism were found across these groups: For youths scoring lower, medium, and higher on the recidivism-risk scale, recidivism rates at 24-months follow-up were 51%, 64%, and 76%, respectively. At each follow-up period approximately eight to twelve percentage-points separated the recidivism rates of the three recidivism-risk groups. For instance, at 12-months follow-up the rates were 40% for lower risks, 50% for medium risks, and 52% for higher risks. However, essentially no differences were found among the three risk levels in average number of post-camp offenses, and only modest differences were found in the percentage of youths with post-camp violence.

TABLE 2

Satisfactorily Released and Unsatisfactorily Removed Youths
With One or More Sustained Petitions, or Convictions,
During 12- and 24-Months Follow-ups

Sex and Type of Release or Removal	Total Releases	Youths With One or More Sustained Petitions or Convictions			
		12 Months		24 Months	
	N	N	%	N	%
<u>Total</u>	2,835	1,523	54	1,846	65
Males	2,589	1,427	55	1,735	67
Females	246	96	39	111	45
<u>Satisfactory</u>	2,330	1,114	48	1,403	60
Males	2,123	1,047	49	1,323	62
Females	207	67	32	80	39
<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	505	409	81	443	88
Males	466	380	82	412	88
Females	39	29	74	31	80

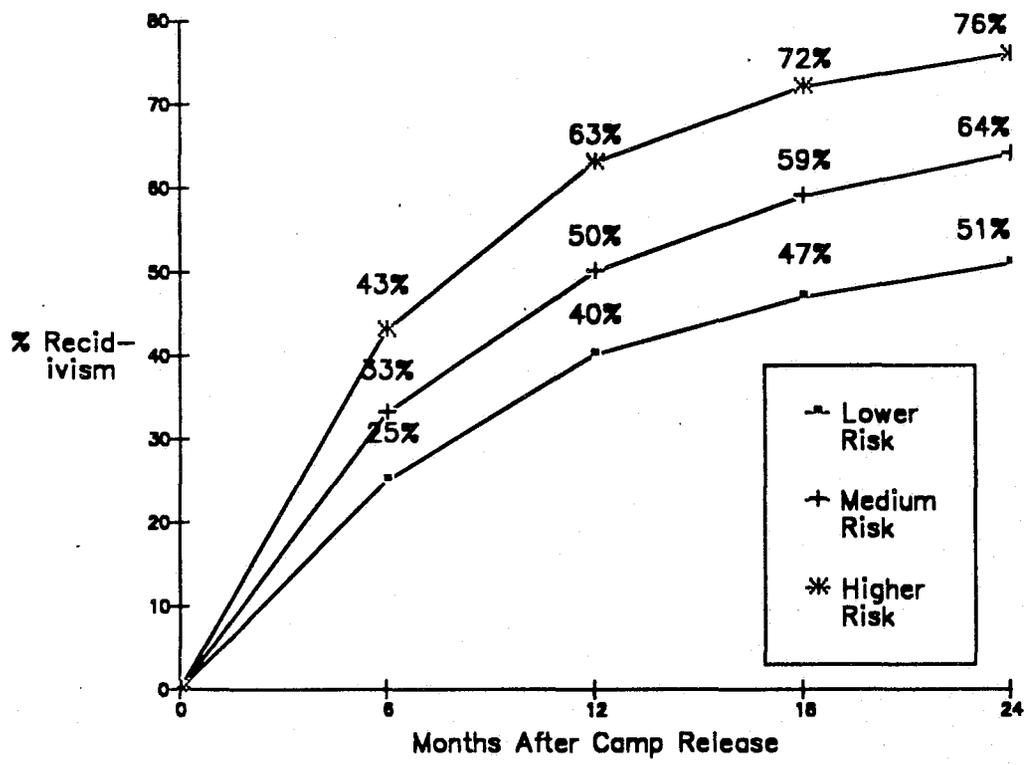


FIGURE 3
 Recidivism Rates for Camp Youths in
 Lower, Medium, and Higher
 Recidivism-Risk Groups

Three points should be noted: (1) the three risk factors were not designed to predict severity of offending, for instance, post-camp violence; instead, they focused on the likelihood of any offending. Thus, youths who were higher recidivism risks were not necessarily higher violence risks. (2) Pre-camp violence was not included as a fourth risk factor because it was found to add very little to the amount of post-camp recidivism that was already predicted by the three factors alone. (3) The present risk predictions and the particular scores on which they were based applied specifically to the camp sample and would not necessarily apply to field probationers; this is because camp youths were generally more delinquent.³

Controlling for youth's recidivism risk, no relationship was found between length of stay in camp and recidivism during 24-months follow-up.⁴ Though aftercare might possibly play a significant role in post-camp

performance, it could not be systematically examined in this study. At any rate, when recidivism risk was controlled, the moderate quality and relatively cursory nature of the aftercare data that were available revealed no relationship to recidivism during the 24-months follow-up.

As shown in Figure 4, the camp experience—or camp plus aftercare—may have positively impacted violence. Compared to the 24 months preceding camp, the number of satisfactorily released males who committed a violent offense (whether prior, instant, or both) dropped 53% in the 24 months after camp and the rate of such offending by those releases fell 54% during that time. Because of limitations in the available data, the study could not determine the extent to which the rate for all offenses—violent plus non-violent combined—decreased from 24 months pre-camp to 24 months post-camp.

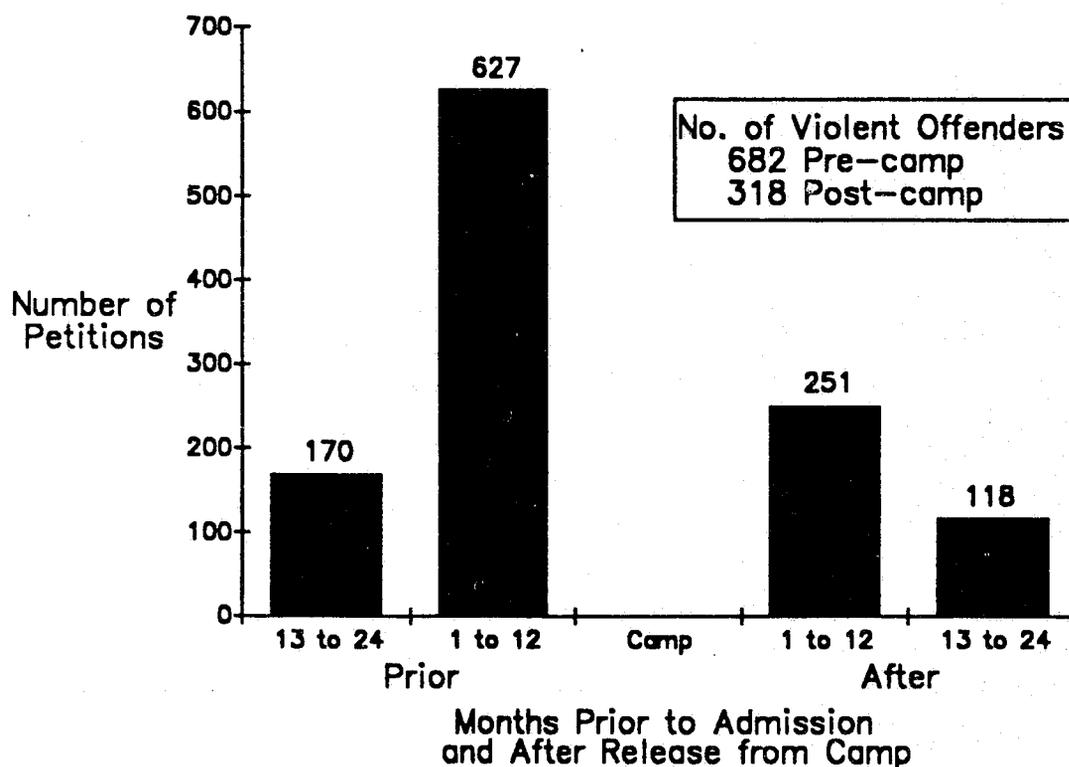


FIGURE 4
Sustained Petitions for Violent Offenses:
24 Months Before Camp Admission and
24 Months After Camp Release

As seen in Table 3, 29% of all youths were committed to a state correctional institution within 24 months from camp release or removal; for satisfactorily released males the figure was 26%, and for unsatisfactorily removed males it was 50%. Males were three times more likely to be committed than females. Individuals with the highest commitment rates were those (a) who scored higher on the recidivism-risk scale, (b) of black ethnicity, (c) with three or more prior (pre-camp) sustained petitions, and (d) with one or more prior institutional commitments. Except for ethnicity, these characteristics were identical to those found among youths most likely to recidivate. State commitment rates were 19%, 26%, and 38% for youths scoring lower, medium, and higher on the recidivism-risk scale. Finally, despite the large drop in violent offending from the pre- to the post-camp period, many

TABLE 3

Satisfactorily Released and Unsatisfactorily Removed
Youths Committed to State Institutions
During a 24-Months Follow-up

Sex and Type of Release or Removal	Total Releases	Youths Committed to State Institutions	
	N	N	%
<u>Total</u>	2,824 ^a	805	29
Males	2,578	781	30
Females	246	24	10
<u>Satisfactory</u>	2,322	562	24
Males	2,115	548	26
Females	207	14	7
<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	502	243	48
Males	463	233	50
Females	39	10	26

^aExcludes 11 males from predominantly female camps.

such offenses still occurred; and about one-third of all offenses leading to state commitment were of this type. Nevertheless, youths who had pre-camp violence were only slightly more likely to commit post-camp violent offenses than were youths who had not committed pre-camp violent offenses.

Camps compared to Youth Authority. Comparisons between outcomes for camp and YA youths were of uncertain validity because of differences between the two samples that may not have been satisfactorily equalized by statistically adjusting for level of recidivism risk. For example: a) YA wards had longer and more serious (violent) prior records; b) length of stay was longer for YA wards (14.5 months, vs. 5.9 for camp youths); and c) differences existed in aftercare (YA wards were supervised an average of 18 months after release, compared to 6 months for camp youths). With these qualifications, the following probation camps and Youth Authority recidivism results were obtained for males.

- The 24-month sustained-petition recidivism rate for probation camps was 62.2%; for Youth Authority juvenile court wards it was 69.4%. This difference in actual rates was not statistically significant. The statistically adjusted rates were: probation camps, 63.5%; YA, 65.6%.

Due to a lack of comparable data, comparisons were not made between Youth Authority wards and probation camp youths on rate of state commitment.

Differences in Effectiveness Among Camps

Because the study was not a controlled experiment, it was impossible to tell if probation camps produced different recidivism rates than other approaches or placements with which they might have been compared, such as intensive field probation, privately operated programs, or direct commitment to the Youth Authority. However, since camps could be compared with each other, it was possible to ask if some had lower recidivism rates than others, and, if so, what characterized camps with lower recidivism rates. A positive answer to the first question and specific answers to the second could bear on

the goal of reducing the 62% recidivism rate of male satisfactory releases who were followed up for 24 months. Such reduction could be considered an important public protection goal. (The analyses which follow are based on all male, satisfactory releases.)

Regarding the question, "Did some camps have lower recidivism rates than others?", some camps did have lower rates than others. At the lower end, 16% of the camps had recidivism rates between 40%-49% and 27% had rates between 50%-59%. In the middle and upper-middle range, 29% had rates between 60%-69%, and 24% had rates between 70%-79%. At the upper end, 2% of the camps had recidivism rates between 80%-89% and the remaining 2% had rates between 90%-99%. These rates and rate-differences were largely unchanged after statistically adjusting for youths' level of recidivism risk and for other recidivism-related factors. Though the preceding figures are for all camps combined, similar rates and differences were found for Los Angeles County camps and for camps in the remainder of the state, separately.

In most effectiveness analyses, Los Angeles County and non-Los Angeles County camps were routinely examined separately from each other. This was because they differed substantially on such factors as average rated capacity, average daily population, average length of stay, percentage of open vs. closed camps, and percentage of minority youths. They also differed on percentage of youths (a) committed for a person offense and (b) with a history of gang involvement as well as weapons use.

Regarding the question, "What characterized the more successful camps?", several camps were identified that not only shared certain characteristics with each other but which had significantly lower recidivism rates than camps which had fewer or none of those characteristics. Each set of shared features was called a camp-type. (See Appendix A for a complete list of features studied. Several preliminary camp-types were derived, by using the statistical techniques of factor and regression analysis.) For example, one

preliminary camp-type (Type A) was characterized as follows: a camp comprised of a single living unit located in a rural setting. Its length of stay tended to be longer, and its program emphasized academic training and work activities. In these camps, program assignments were made uniformly and youths were present at their case reviews. In addition, there was a higher youth-to-staff ratio. Though the relationship between this ratio and lower recidivism may seem counter-intuitive, it is possible that it applies only in combination with certain other camp characteristics. ("Longer," "higher," etc., meant quantitatively more than the average for all camps combined. Specific definitions are provided: see Appendix B regarding measurement of program activities.) Not all characteristics of a camp-type were equally weighted, and some had more relative importance than others in defining a camp's individuality and in contributing to recidivism reduction.

Camps that had most or all such features were "high-score" camps and were called Type A camps. All remaining camps—that is, camps with few or no such features—were "low-score" camps. The 24 months recidivism rate in high-score camps (that is, in Type A camps) averaged 54%; in the remaining camps combined (low-score camps) it was 72%. Moreover, significant differences were found by specific level of recidivism risk. For instance, as seen in Table 4, among camps that scored high on this camp-type the average recidivism rates for lower-, medium-, and higher-risk youths were 33%, 59%, and 62% respectively; in low-scoring camps they were 58%, 72%, and 83%. Thus, level of recidivism risk did not, by itself, automatically predict outcome or relative success. For instance, in high-score camps (Type A camps) the recidivism rate for higher-risk youths (62%) was lower than that for medium-risk youths in low-score camps (72%), and was almost the same as that for lower-risks within low-score camps (58%). (This was also observed in connection with Type B camps. There, for example, higher-risk youths in high-score camps had a rate of 50%, and lower-risk youths in low-score camps had 64%.)

In addition, substantial differences were found in state commitment rates for some camp-types, again at 24-months follow-up. For example, as seen in Table 4, among high-score (that is, Type A) camps the rate for lower-risk youths was 2%; in low-score camps it was 21% for lower-risk youths. For high- and low-score camps respectively, the commitment rates for higher-risk youths were 19% and 34%.

TABLE 4
Outcomes by Risk Level for Camp-Type A

Risk Level	Score on Camp-Type	Adjusted 24 Mos. Recidivism Rate (Percentage)	Adjusted 24 Mos. Commitment Rate (Percentage)
ALL RISKS COMBINED	High	54*	18
	Low	72	22
LOWER	High	33*	2*
	Low	58	21
MEDIUM	High	59*	23
	Low	72	19
HIGHER	High	62*	19
	Low	83	34

*Significant difference at .05 level.

The preceding is only one example of a camp-type, since several others were found. For instance, another group of camps had a different combination of features (Type B). The characteristics of Types A and B are listed in Figure 5. As can be seen, little overlap exists in the descriptive characteristics of these types. Camp-Type B may be described as follows: an uncrowded camp with smaller living units which contain rooms rather than dorms. Compared to the remaining camps (that is, camps scoring low on Type B features), the Type B camps had the following program features): more counseling, offgrounds activities, outside contacts, academic training, and

recreation; that is, it had more hours and/or a higher frequency of these activities per week. Like Type A, Type B camps had higher youth-to-staff ratios; also, their youths were present at case reviews. Unlike Type A, Type B camps assigned youths to programs on an individual basis. This camp-type also used volunteers to a greater extent than non-Type B camps. Camps with most of these features had an average recidivism rate of 50% at 24-months follow-up; those with few had 69%. Type B camps also had a lower proportion of youths with violent offenses during the follow-up. Significant differences were also found in state commitment rates—for example, 32% for Type B camps and 64% for non Type B camps, in the case of higher-risk youths (Wedge & Palmer, 1989; Palmer & Wedge, 1989).

Camp Characteristics	Type A Camp	Type B Camp
Rural Setting	+	
Lower Camp Occupancy Rate		+
Smaller Living Units		+
Single Living Unit	+	
Rooms More Than Dorms		+
Longer Length of Stay	+	
Counseling		+
Offgrounds Activities		+
Outside Contacts		+
Academic Training	+	+
Recreation		+
Work Activities	+	
Higher Youth-to-Staff Ratios	+	+
More Use of Volunteers		+
Youth Present at Case Reviews	+	+
Individual Program Assignment	-	+

FIGURE 5: Examples of More Successful Camp-Types: Characteristics of Types A and B

In all analyses of camp-types, youths' level of recidivism risk was statistically adjusted so that no camps would have an advantage over others—for example, an advantage that might have resulted from the presence of a higher percentage of lower- and medium-risk youths in their populations.⁵ Though the findings associated with these types were statistically significant, they should be considered provisional until validated with a second sample of camp youths. Finally, since the study was not a controlled experiment, it was not possible to definitely say that the camp features associated with lower recidivism rates or state commitment rates caused those lower rates; nevertheless, they may have contributed.

The analysis of camp effectiveness was presented in project report No. 4 and was summarized in the final report (Wedge & Palmer, 1989; Palmer & Wedge, 1989). Also included in report No. 4 were findings for such post-camp performance measures as (a) number of sustained petitions, (b) most serious sustained petition, and (c) time from release to first sustained petition—measures which supplemented the rates of such petitions and of state commitment.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Contributions of Camps

In assessing probation camp effectiveness, the study emphasized corrections' principal or at least most common performance measure: recidivism subsequent to program exposure. However, recidivism reduction is not the only service these facilities may provide. For instance:

- Camps incapacitate; that is, they provide direct public protection during the period of incarceration.

The study found that the average period of incarceration—therefore, direct public protection—was about 6 months per youth; and during that time, 9%

escaped. Most such escapes were walk-aways and failures-to-return-from-furloughs by individual youths. Few escapes compared to prison breaks, for instance, with regard to threatened or actual injury or widespread destruction. Therefore:

- Camps provide a period of community protection.

While incapacitation directly provides immediate albeit temporary public protection, punishment is usually considered payment for one's crime(s). Besides providing incapacitation and punishment—both of which are often thought to deter many individuals from future offending—probation camps may play yet another role:

- Camps reduce unnecessary penetration into the justice system, insofar as they provide an appropriate alternative to state institutionalization for youths removed from the community.

To be sure, if used for individuals who might have been worked with in the community, camps may facilitate such penetration, though at an earlier point. The study did not try to determine the extent to which probation camps—on balance—either reduced or increased unneeded penetration.

Last but not least:

- Camps may reduce violent offending.

Compared to the 24 months preceding camps, the number of satisfactorily released males who had committed a violent offense during that pre-camp period dropped 53% in the 24 months after camp. However, because the study was not a controlled experiment it is not certain that camp itself caused the decrease.

Implications for Individual Camps

The study suggests the following for individual camps:

- If camps which presently have higher recidivism rates are modified to more clearly resemble those with lower rates, the former camps' rates can be expected to drop.

- The average risk level of youths committed to camps should probably not be changed without considering camp characteristics—specifically, the particular strengths of the camps' existing features. This is because an interaction exists between camp characteristics and risk level; with regard to their relationship to recidivism.

More specifically, some camps' features—or features they could perhaps adopt—might be equally or better suited for certain risk levels than for others, for instance, better suited for medium- or higher-risk youths than for lower-risks.

Conclusions

The Camps, Ranches, and Schools Study provided (a) the first systematic, statewide description of California's probation camps and camp-youth population, (b) the first comparison between this youth population and other justice system youths, and (c) basic recidivism and state commitment rates for the overall camp population as well as various subgroups. In this regard it generated baseline information for practitioners and policy makers at a statewide as well as county level, and it provided leads for more focused research.

The study provided clues as to possible ways of lowering recidivism by modifying camps and their programs. However, the costs of such camp changes were not examined. A detailed, 1984 study by the Probation Business Managers Association compared the costs of camps, juvenile halls, and California Youth Authority facilities (Ward & Barry, 1984).

The study found that camps provide direct public protection by means of incapacitation and that they can reduce unnecessary penetration into the justice system.

The camp study also suggested that practitioners, planners, and others should consider neither risk level nor program features independently of each other. Instead, they should view them as interrelated with regard to their

possible association with post-program recidivism, and should therefore consider them simultaneously. Outcome-related interactions of this type—for example, between risk-related youth-characteristics, on the one hand, and programs/settings, on the other—have long been described in correctional research literature and need not be overlooked now (Reiss, 1951; Mannheim & Wilkins, 1955; Weeks, 1955; Grant & Grant, 1959; Mueller, 1960; Sealy & Banks, 1971; Warren, 1971; Palmer, 1974, 1983). For instance, results from this study suggest it is not the case that (a) lower-risk youths will almost invariably have better outcomes than medium- and higher-risks and that (b) the same will apply to medium-risks as compared to higher-risks—regardless of the particular program features to which they are exposed.

Do findings from this study have policy implications regarding specific changes that can be recommended for individual probation camps or for camps in general? The answer is, not quite yet. The study found, for example, that below average recidivism was associated with camps that have certain combinations of features, such as lower camp occupancy rates, smaller living units, greater use of counseling and academic training, and more use of volunteers; other sets of features associated with lower recidivism were found as well. However, scientific caution suggests that before any such findings can be considered really solid they must be validated by the study which is currently underway with a second sample of probation camp youths. If these or similar findings are confirmed by the validation study, it would then be appropriate for existing camps which do not have sets of features such as those mentioned above to adopt those or similar features to the extent feasible, and for future camps to adopt such features from the start, if possible.

Finally the specific leads this study generated regarding possible recidivism reduction may provide direction for future probation camp studies. For instance, these studies might include (a) detailed descriptions and

follow-ups of the more successful types of camps, (b) experiments on the comparative effectiveness of successful probation camps and specialized or intensive community-based alternatives to camps, and (c) experiments on the comparative effectiveness of probation camps and Youth Authority programs for high recidivism-risk youths.

FOOTNOTES

1. Overall, probation staff indicated that camp characteristics underwent few major changes between 1982 and mid-1984. Calendar 1982 was the year in which the youth cohort that was followed up for 24 months was released from camp. Mid-1984 was the point at which camp-descriptive data were obtained via a survey of camp administrators or other knowledgeable staff.
2. Satisfactory completions were operationally defined as (a) release to a probation aftercare program or other probation caseload, or (b) release following termination of wardship, for example, due to age or—less often—medical reasons. Unsatisfactory termination meant (a) removal during escape status, (b) disciplinary transfer, or (c) any other negative removal. All information regarding camp completion and termination was obtained and coded by probation staff (Wedge & Palmer, 1989).
3. Thus, for instance, camp youths who scored in the "lower-risk" category on likelihood of recidivating might be equivalent in that regard to field probationers (i.e., non-camp youths) whose scores might have placed them in the "medium-risk" or perhaps "higher-risk" category. In short, though the three risk-factors would remain applicable to the non-camp youths, their absolute and/or relative weights would have to be changed and the specific operational (i.e., score-based) definitions of lower-, medium-, and higher-risk would therefore differ from that of the camp youths.
4. This finding was directly reflected in terms of recidivism risk as well: For lower-, medium-, and higher-risk youths, the average length of stay (LOS) in camp was 5.9, 5.9, and 5.9 months (179, 180, and 180 days) respectively. It might be added that the percentage of satisfactory releases with a 0 to 3.9 months LOS, a 4.0 to 6.9 months LOS, and a 7.0 months or more LOS was 31, 38, and 31 respectively. For unsatisfactory releases/removals it was 61, 21, and 18.
5. Variables and factors used to statistically adjust for risk were: recidivism risk (based on age at first sustained petition; number of prior [pre-camp] sustained petitions; number of prior institutional placements); open (non-secure) vs. closed (secure) camp; age at release from camp; number of months in camp. In statewide analyses, Los Angeles County vs. non-Los Angeles County camp was an additional covariate.

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APPENDIX A: Camp Features Used In Analyzing Effectiveness

1. General Features (7 items)

- o Camp Setting (rural, nonrural)
- o Camp Capacity (smaller, medium, larger)
- o Camp Capacity Used (lower, medium, higher)
- o Living-Unit Capacity (smaller, larger)
- o Number of Living Units (single, multiple)
- o Living-Unit Arrangement (dorms, rooms)
- o Average Length of Stay (shorter, medium, longer)

2. Program Features (16 items)

(a) Weekly hours of participation per youth and (b) weekly frequency of participation per youth were examined separately, in relation to each of the following, 8 program components (8 x 2 [hrs. & freq.] = 16 items):

- o Counseling/Casework
- o Vocational Training
- o Work Detail
- o Academic Training
- o Religious Activity
- o Recreation
- o Off-grounds Activities
- o Outside Contacts

3. Case Processing and Aftercare (6 items)

- o Type of Initial Program Assignment (uniform vs. individualized)
- o Youth's Presence vs. Non-presence at Case Reviews
- o Basis of Progress-through-Program ("Stages" vs. "Rankings" vs. "Other" Approach)
- o Percentage of Camp Releases, i.e., Aftercare Cases, on Probation Caseloads (lower vs. higher)
- o Post-camp Scope/Emphasis on Aftercare (less vs. more)
- o Overall (Camp + Post-camp) Scope/Emphasis on Aftercare (less vs. more)

4. Staff (3 items)

- o Ratio of Youths to Total Staff
- o Ratio of Youths to Treatment Staff
- o Hours of Volunteer Service per Youth per Month

APPENDIX B: Hours and Frequency of Participation Per Youth Per Week in Camp Program Activities

Amount of Activity	Type of Activity							
	Coun- seling	Voca- tional	Work Detail	Aca- demic	Reli- gious	Recrea- tion	Off Grounds	Outside Contact
<u>More Hours</u>								
Average	8.2	12.8	15.9	24.8	2.5	19.7	20.9	7.8
Std. Dev.	5.5	8.2	5.1	4.2	0.7	4.2	0.7	10.1
<u>Fewer Hours</u>								
Average	1.6	0.6	6.1	11.9	1.4	9.2	2.5	1.5
Std. Dev.	0.4	2.2	3.1	5.7	0.6	4.5	3.2	0.9
<u>Higher Freq.</u>								
Average	4.0	4.3	7.2	5.0	1.6	9.3	1.5	2.3
Std. Dev.	2.9	1.1	3.7	0.0	0.5	4.0	0.8	1.4
<u>Lower Freq.</u>								
Average	1.2	0.3	3.0	3.4	1.2	5.3	0.5	0.8
Std. Dev.	0.2	0.9	1.2	0.8	0.3	1.1	0.5	0.6

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