Research Note

DETENTION DECISIONS IN JUVENILE CASES: JINS, JDs, AND GENDER

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Preadjudicatory detention is used for about one-third of all juvenile offenders (Poulin $et\ al.$, 1980). A protectionist purpose is often held to justify both the need for discretionary decision making in these cases and the absence of due process protections. In this study, we have included measures of juvenile offenders' socioemotional status with indicators of their legal status and social background in a log-linear analysis of detention decisions in New Jersey. The results suggest that protectionism is a major influence on these decisions and is in turn related to the impact of gender.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tension between protectionist impulses and due process concerns has existed since the establishment of the juvenile justice system (Bortner, 1982; Platt, 1969; Sutton, 1985). While juvenile justice reforms in the 1960s and 1970s emphasized due process guarantees, the language and structure of preadjudicatory detention decision making still suggest a protectionist purpose. Our research evaluates the impact of protectionist and due process concerns with a log-linear analysis of detention decisions in six New Jersey counties. Measures of socioemotional problems allow a more direct test of the protectionist model than has previously been possible, while distinction of status and nonstatus offenders and tests for interaction effects with gender allow the evaluation of the due process model and comparison with findings of other detention studies.

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II. STATUS OFFENDERS, DELINQUENTS, AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

The protectionist sentiment that motivated the founders of the American juvenile justice system was officially abandoned by the time of the Supreme Court's landmark decisions in *Kent* v. *U.S.* (383 U.S. 541 (1966)), *In re Gault* (387 U.S. 1 (1967)), and *In re Winship* (397 U.S. 358 (1970)). Due process standards were to shape decision making for juveniles accused of criminal offenses, while the treatment of status offenders (known as Juveniles in Need of Supervision, or JINS, in New Jersey) was to be decriminalized (Abadinsky, 1976; Jenkins *et al.*, 1985; Krisberg and Schwartz, 1983).

Standards for preadjudicatory detention were influenced, but not transformed, by these changes in juvenile law. Although the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. § 5601, et seq.) mandated the elimination of secure detention for status offenders (Poulin et al., 1980), preadjudicatory detention practices still varied widely between states; concerns with minimizing the risk of juveniles' running away and committing another offense often were complemented by protectionist impulses (Bookin-Weiner, 1984: 41–42; Jenkins et al., 1985: 102–103). In New Jersey, the juvenile code implemented in 1974 (Laws of 1973, Chapter 306) stipulated more legalistic criteria for the detention of juvenile delinquents and more protectionist criteria for detaining status offenders (Dannefer and DeJames, 1979: 23–26, 41, 50).1

Empirical research has not yielded strong support for either an exclusively legalistic or protectionist explanation of preadjudicatory decision making. Some studies have been able at least partially to explain detention decisions with legal factors (Sumner, 1970), some with social factors (Dannefer, 1984; Sarri, 1983), some with both legal and social factors (Bookin-Weiner, 1984; Cohen and Kluegel, 1979; Dannefer and Schutt, 1982; Dungworth, 1977; Pawlak, 1977), and some with neither (Frazier and Bishop, 1985). A "chivalrous" or "paternalistic" orientation toward female juveniles has often been used as an indicator of protectionism in the juvenile courts (Armstrong, 1977; Barton, 1976; Chesney-Lind, 1977; Datesman and Scarpitti, 1977: 73; Krohn et al., 1983; Staples, 1984; Teilman and Landry, 1981), but in detention decisions the tendency to punish girls less severely for property or violent

¹ The code stipulated that delinquents were to be detained in secure facilities if it was deemed necessary to secure their presence at the next hearing or if the nature of the offense was such that the juveniles' release would threaten the community's physical safety. A juvenile status offender was to be detained (in nonsecure shelters) if no appropriate adult agreed to assume responsibility for the juvenile and release on the basis of a summons to the juvenile was not appropriate, if it was necessary to protect the health or safety of the juvenile or to secure his or her presence at the next hearing, or if the physical or mental condition of the juvenile made his or her immediate release impractical (see also Poulin $et\ al.$, 1980).

crimes and more severely for status offenses has been identified only at the trivariate level (Dungworth, 1977; Pawlak, 1977).

III. DATA

We obtained our data for this study with a systematic stratified random sample of 2,489 cases drawn from the juvenile court records of six New Jersey counties: two urban, two rural, and two suburban. The sample was stratified by sex and offense type to ensure adequate numbers for multivariate analyses. Equal numbers of cases were selected in the year before and the year after adoption of the 1974 New Jersey juvenile code. Although this code separated the treatment of status offenders from that of juvenile delinquents, our analyses failed to indicate any differences in patterns of relationships in the two years. Therefore, we combined data from both years for this analysis.

We coded characteristics of cases from case records. We identified the number of prior offenses as the number of past arrests for status or delinquent offenses. "Allegation" indicates the type of offense allegedly committed by the juvenile: delinquent (violent, property, drug, and such minor crimes as vandalism, disorderly conduct, trespassing, and intoxication) and status offenses (runaway, incorrigible, and truancy/"other").²

Two variables measure the socioemotional status of the juveniles. "Stress" is a count of the number of major stressful events the juvenile was exposed to in the preceding year, such as abuse or neglect, death or illness in the family, separation or divorce of parents, unemployment of breadwinner, move of juvenile, acting out or other emotional behavior by siblings, adjudication of siblings, and lack of parental support or involvement. (Since the number of parents is measured in another variable, separation or divorce of parents was excluded from the count of stressful events.) "Emotional problems" is a count of the number of specific emotional problems indicated in the juvenile's record: possible problems were hospitalization for emotional disorder, outpatient treatment, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, destructiveness against property, persons, or self (three items), arson, depressiveness, hostility, diagnosed psychotic, and diagnosed nonpsychotic emotional disor-

² To eliminate the structural zeros resulting from the correspondence of the JINS/JD classification with allegation, we grouped all allegations into three categories: severe (violent and runaway), moderate (property and incorrigible), and mild (minor delinquent and truancy/other). Since the JINS/JD variable is included in each table involving allegation, the unique effects of the six allegation types are not obscured by this procedure (they would be represented by a three-way interaction between JINS/JD, allegation, and detention). The severity ranking of the criminal offenses is consistent with criminal law. In addition, detention rates were very similar for drug and minor delinquent offenses. The severity ranking of the status offenses reflects the extent to which each offense type involves a rupturing of family bonds (Jenkins *et al.*, 1985: 88–91).

der. Both stress and emotional problems were recoded to "none" and "some" for the analysis.³

We coded race as white or minority (including the 6% of the sample who were Hispanic). Family configuration was either "2 parent" (including both natural parents or one substitute and one natural) or "1 parent" (including single, relative or guardian, foster parents, institution, or none). We used three categories of complaint sources based on the offender who brought the complaint to the attention of authorities. The coding according to the categories of "police" (including witness), "victim" (including school), and "parent" (including welfare) compensated for common ambiguities (for example, the welfare department may call the probation department about an incorrigible juvenile left for a time by his parents, or a witness may call the police about an incident involving a juvenile). We assessed detention status in terms of the initial decision to hold the juvenile in either a detention facility or a JINS shelter before formal judicial review.

The analysis begins with the cross-tabulations of detention with each of the independent variables separately for offenders classified as Juveniles in Need of Supervision (JINS) and as juvenile delinquents (JDs). We then use log-linear analysis to identify the independent effects of each variable on detention and the interactions between them (see Burke and Turk, 1975; Cohen and Kluegel, 1979). Since we treat detention as dependent on the other variables, we use a modified multiple-regression form of log-linear analysis in which a term representing all interactions of the independent variables with each other is included in each model, leaving for explanation only the log of the odds of cell frequencies that vary on the dependent variable (Goodman, 1972). We use a combination of forward selection and backward elimination to determine which interaction terms to include in our final models (Goodman, 1971; see also Brown, 1976) and present only the lambda coefficients for these terms.

Our specific model selection procedure is constrained by the number of independent variables, which results in a total number of cells in the complete table with all ten variables of over 2,300. This large size precludes the simultaneous analysis of effects in the complete table, since with missing values removed there are more cells than cases. The resultant overidentification results in a chi-square value with a probability of one for the model that includes the interactions between the independent variables only; the re-

³ Indications of emotional problems or exposure to stress were more likely to be included in the files of juveniles who were seen more often by the police or actually detained or both. Other juveniles having less contact with the police in the past or the future (after the detention decision was made) were less likely to have indications of these problems in their files, even when they actually had experienced them. Since these variables may thus be confounded to some extent with the detention decision itself and with other aspects of the case, we entered them into the analysis in a separate stage.

maining variation in cell frequencies is inadequate for the identification of unique effects on detention (cf. Hanushek and Jackson, 1977: 233). Therefore, log-linear tests of effects are conducted with four models: The first three include the variables most directly related to social background, legal status, and socioemotional problems, respectively; the last model is a combined model including gender, offense type (JINS/JD), emotional problems, prior offenses, and allegation.

IV. FINDINGS

Relationships between the independent variables and detention controlling for JINS/JD are presented in cross-tabular form in Table 1. Both formal legal variables have significant effects. JDs charged with violent offenses and JINS charged with running away or incorrigibility were more likely to be detained than those facing other charges. Prior offenses increased the likelihood of detention only for JDs, not for JINS. Both exposure to stressful events and emotional problems markedly increased the likelihood of detention for both JDs and JINS.

The effects of other social characteristics were not as strong or as consistent. Female JINS were more likely to be detained than male JINS, but gender had no effect for JDs. Juveniles from single-parent families were somewhat more likely to be detained than those from two-parent families, whether charged with JD or JINS offenses. Black juveniles were somewhat more likely to be detained for JD offenses, but whites were more likely to be detained for JINS offenses. Detention was most likely when parents were the source of the complaint, whether it involved a JINS or JD charge. Throughout these tables, it is also apparent that juveniles charged with JINS offenses were more likely to be detained than those charged as JDs.

Tests of models involving gender, parental configuration, JINS/JD, race, and complainant as well as detention led to a final stage-one model that included two four-way interactions and one three-way interaction. Lambda coefficients are presented for each of the terms in this model in Table 2.⁴ The main effects are consistent with those indicated in the bivariate analysis (see Table 1). Juveniles who were female, lived with one parent, were white, were reported by their parents, and were JINS were more likely to be detained.⁵ Contrary to the gender bias perspective, gender

⁴ Tables 2–4 and supplementary tables reporting preliminary steps involved in log-linear model building (for tables 2–5) are available from: Russell K. Schutt, Dept. of Sociology, Univ. of Mass., Boston, MA 02125.

⁵ Since we hypothesized these main effects a priori, the significance of the coefficients can be estimated by the standard error of lambda. This statistic is distributed as a standardized normal deviate. Those coefficients for which the standard error of lambda is greater than or equal to 2.0 are starred in each table of log-linear results to indicate they are significant at the .05 level (Goodman, 1969: 7–10; 1970: 229).

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Table 1. Crosstabulation of Detention by Independent Variables by JINS/JDs

Variables/Category	Percent Detained (N) ^a			
	JDs		JINS	
Gender				
Male	14%	(1086)	26%	(442)***
Female	14%	(467)	40%	(474)
Race/Ethnicity ^b				
Black	19%	(436)*	31%	(245)*
Hispanic	20%	(76)	22%	(41)
White	13%	(719)	39%	(413)
Family Configuation				
2 parent	12%	(805)***	31%	(465)*
1 parent	19%	(572)	38%	(395)
Complainant ^c				
Police	16%	(994)***	25%	(214)
Victim	7%	(462)	24%	(101)
Parent	52%	(27)	44%	(412)
School	7%	(28)	6%	(127)
Welfare	25%	(4)	79%	(34)
Emotional Problems				
No	8%	(1053)***	24%	(508)***
Yes	27%	(500)	45%	(408)
Stressful Events				
No	9%	(1133)***	26%	(561)***
Yes	27%	(420)	45%	(355)
Prior Offenses				
No	10%	(845)***	32%	(524)
Yes	19%	(708)	35%	(392)
Allegation ^d				
Violent	19%	(316)**		
Property	14%	(633)		
Drugs	12%	(232)		
Minor	11%	(342)		
Runaway			49%	(360)***
Incorrigible			38%	(274)
Truancy, other			9%	(282)

^a Chi-square tests were conducted for the relationship between each independent variable and detention, within the categories of JINS/JD.

^b Hispanics are grouped with blacks in the log-linear analysis.

^c "Welfare" is grouped with "parent" and "school" with "victim" in the log-linear analysis.

d "Drugs" and "minor" are grouped together in the log-linear analysis. The three categories of both JDs and JINS allegations are then classified, as ordered, as "severe," "moderate," and "mild."

 $p \le .05$ ** $p \le .01$

^{***} p \leq .001

did not interact with either family configuration or classification as a JINS.

One three-way and two four-way interactions were significant using conventional criteria, tentatively identifying specifications of the effects of the independent variables.⁶ Black and Hispanic juveniles were particularly likely to be detained if they lived with two parents, while whites were more likely to be detained when they lived with one parent. Male minority juveniles who were reported by the police were particularly likely to be detained, while male whites were more likely to be detained when they were reported by their parents. Both of these interactions suggest that the parens patriae approach (the government acting, as a parent, to protect the child) may be applied to whites more readily than to minority juveniles. However, this pattern did not appear among females; the other significant four-way interaction—of sex, complainant, JINS/JD, and detention—was also not readily interpretable in theoretical terms.

The analysis of the effects of the legal variables of prior record and allegation resulted in a simpler final model involving only two three-way interactions and one two-way interaction (Table 3). All four of the independent variables in this model had significant main effects. Detention was more likely among those with just one parent, those who were JINS, and those with prior records who were accused of more serious offenses. The JINS/JD classification interacted separately with both allegation and prior record in its effect on detention. JDs were more likely to be detained when they had records, while JINS were more likely to be detained when they did not have prior offenses. However, JINS were more likely to be detained when they had severe allegations (running away or incorrigibility), while JDs were more likely to be detained when they had mild allegations (drug or minor offenses). This interaction between allegation, JINS/JD, and detention approached significance using the more stringent criteria recommended by Goodman (1969) for exploratory analyses, although the interaction of prior offenses, JINS/JD, and detention was significant only using the conventional .05 significance level. Gender had no independent main effect nor an interaction effect on detention in this model.

In the third component of the analysis, the indicators of emotional problems and environmental stress were included with gender, parental configuration, and JINS/JD (Table 4). In the final model at this stage, juveniles with emotional problems and significant stress in the preceding year were more likely to be detained.

⁶ Goodman (1969: 8–10) has argued for more stringent criteria for statistical significance in purely inductive analyses. The interactions discovered in this analysis do not meet these criteria; they should be viewed as more likely to reflect the operation of chance factors than is implied by a conventional interpretation of significance levels.

Neither family configuration nor JINS/JD had a significant main effect in this model, but female JINS in particular were likely to be detained. The four-way interaction of family configuration, stress, emotional problems, and detention again suggests the possibility of more complex conditional effects than those predicted.

In the final combined model, JINS/JD, allegation, and emotional problems all exhibited the same pattern of effects as in the previously tested models (Table 5). However, prior offenses in combination with these other variables did not have a significant effect. The lambda coefficients for gender's main effect do not quite satisfy the conventional criteria for significance. Three three-way interactions and one four-way interaction were signifi-

Table 5. Lambda Coefficients for Detention and Selected Variables (Model: ERXJA, EJDA)

Variable/Categories	Detention		
Main Effects			
Emotional Problems			
No	294*		
Yes	.294*		
Gender			
Male	054		
Female	.054		
JINS/JD			
JD	181*		
JINS	.181*		
Allegation			
Severe	.276*		
Moderate	.092*		
Mild	368*		
Interactions			
Emotional Problems, JINS/JD = JINS			
No	.081*		
Yes	081*		
Allegations, $JINS/JD = JINS$			
Severe	.125*		
Moderate	.111*		
Mild	236*		
Allegation, Emotional Problems = Yes			
Severe	.043		
Moderate	078 *		
Mild	.036		
Allegation, Emotional Problems, JINS/JD = JINS	Emot. Problems		
Allegation	No	Yes	
Severe	.104	104*	
Moderate	001	.001	
Mild	103	.103*	

^{*} $\lambda/S.E.\lambda > 2$

cant at the conventional level. Juveniles with more severe allegations were particularly likely to be detained if they were JINS, juveniles without apparent emotional problems were particularly likely to be detained if they were JINS, and juveniles with moderate allegations were less likely to be detained if they had emotional problems. Among JINS, however, juveniles with mild allegations were particularly likely to be detained if they had emotional problems.

V. DISCUSSION

At the zero-order level, both legal and social characteristics appeared to influence detention decisions, but only some of these main effects were independent of the others. Status offenders were more likely to be detained than delinquents in each model tested, but the effect was not significant in all cases. The effect of family configuration operated through other social characteristics: Juveniles with one parent seemed more likely to be detained because they had experienced more stress (not including the loss of a parent), and because their offenses were more likely to be reported by their parent than by the police. The main effect of gender was explained statistically by differences in allegation.

There were important multiple interaction effects. A prior record increased the likelihood of detention for JDs but not for JINS. JDs were more likely to be detained when they had been accused of drug or minor crimes rather than more severe offenses. The allegations most conducive to detention for JINS were running away and incorrigibility rather than truancy or other minor status offenses. Female JINS were more likely to be detained than male JINS, while male JDs were more likely to be detained than female JDs. However, this familiar pattern was explained by the legal variables. Girls tended to have the more severe JINS allegations associated with detention, while they tended to have more mild JD allegations than boys.

These findings provide mixed support for a protectionist interpretation of detention decision making (Bookin-Weiner, 1984; Dungworth, 1977). The effects of juveniles' socioemotional status suggest that a protectionist orientation influences decisions with both status and delinquent offenders. However, the analysis was able to explain the "protectionist" interaction of gender and JINS/JD classification with gender differences in allegation. After arrest, male and female juveniles who were charged with similar offenses were subject to preadjudicatory detention at about the same rate.

VI. CONCLUSION

In spite of efforts to decrease its use, preadjudicatory detention continues to be a critical step in the juvenile justice system (Krisberg and Schwartz, 1983; Rubin, 1980). Structurally insulated from the stricter scrutiny focused on court decisions and providing a temporary haven for troubled juveniles, preadjudicatory detention decisions would seem to allow police and probation officers to translate protectionist sentiments into action. However, prior research has not found consistent evidence of such sentiments in these decisions.

Our multistage analysis indicates that one reason for this inconsistency is likely to be minor variation in the specific models tested. The inclusion or exclusion of offense type (including distinctions between status offenses), family configuration, and socioemotional status can be expected to alter the apparent effects of other variables. More importantly, the variables used in earlier research have been confined to the basic legal and sociodemographic characteristics typically available in case records. The one study that employed interviews with juvenile court judges found that concern with juveniles' family situation dominated detention decisions, even though empirical analysis of case record data in the same study failed to identify an effect of family intactness (Bookin-Weiner, 1984). Our findings indicate that the use of direct measures of juveniles' socioemotional situation can provide the missing link between officials' statements and actual case processing patterns.

Further research must also focus on the interactive effects of case characteristics on detention decisions. In this study, for example, children from one-parent families were officially perceived as having been exposed to more stress and were more likely to be referred to the police by their parent. The higher rates of detention for juveniles from one-parent families could thus be explained as a protectionist decision to detain juveniles from highly stressful family situations. However, this protectionist logic only applied to white juveniles, since nonwhite juveniles from one-parent families were not more likely to be detained.

Both protectionist and due process influences pervade the juvenile justice system, although their relative impact has varied over time and across the system's components. Efforts to identify the impact of these concerns are unlikely simply to affirm the salience of just one model unless only simple measurement and modeling procedures are used; the complex reality that legal decision makers confront requires integrated theories and appropriately sophisticated methods.

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