TAPS ACADEMY:
A Quantitative Analysis of Social Distance Between Youth and the Police

Megan A. Harper, MA
Everette B. Penn, PhD, Co-Founder & Director
Social Bond/Social Control Theory

Why individuals conform to moral and socially acceptable behavior rather than delinquent behavior – “middle class values”?

Mentoring may lead to ATTACHMENT with positive connections between individuals and significant others and purports that deviant behavior would damage these relationships.

Youth may exude a level of COMMITMENT by engaging in conventional activities and establishing positive goals that will constrain deviant behavior.

Their INVOLVEMENT, a personal investment of time and energy in conventional activities, limits opportunities for engaging in deviant behavior.

The personal internalization of social norms and values becomes an internal BELIEF in conformity itself.
Social Distance

*Degree to which individuals or groups have positive feelings for other individuals, institutions, or their legal systems.

*Measureable variable used to examine the social bonds between individuals in authoritative positions and those they govern.

*Measured by examining the extent to which minority youth like, feel connected to, trust, and respect the police.

Research consistently shows that the experience of a racial or ethnic community itself play a major role in its relationship with the police, and these experiences vary considerably from group to group. Minority youth have held more negative attitudes towards law enforcement than non-minority youth – revealing the least “trust” of the police, particularly amongst African American youth.
Community Oriented Policing

- Negative Perceptions
- Questions of Agency Legitimacy
- Issues Related to Equality Under the Law

*In an attempt to improve the relationship between at-risk minority youth and the police, the Teen and Police Service Academy (TAPS) was created through partnership between Houston Police Department & University of Houston-Clear Lake, originally funded by the Department of Justice.*
The Teen and Police Service Academy (TAPS)

- Founded in 2011
- Dr. Everette Penn & Ret. Asst. Chief of HPD Brian Lumpkin
- Funded by Department of Justice COPS Grant
- 11 week curriculum taught by secondary education teachers and HPD Officers in Harris County (Houston, Texas)
- Accredited by the Texas Education Agency (TEA)
- Officers mentor at-risk youth placed in juvenile detention, alternative schools, high schools, and other restrictive or rehabilitative settings
• Classes convened once weekly, with an officer-to-student ratio of 1:5

• Each class included:
  • Topic Presentation
  • Small Group
  • Role play/Reflection

• Small group sessions, in which intimate mentor/mentee engagement occurs aims to develop lasting bonds, by learning from each other, communicating with each other to break down stereotypes, and bridging the social distance between them.

CURRICULUM

1. Conflict Resolution
2. Gang Membership
3. Bullying
4. Sexting & Dating Abuse
5. Team Building
6. Nutrition & Gardening
7. Safe Driving
8. Truancy
9. Drugs & Alcohol
10. Active Shooter
Survey Instrument

*Bogardus Social Distance Scale (1933)

*Pre-Test - Week One
Post-Test – Week Ten

*12 Statements created Composite variable COMPOSE

*Reliability or Cronbach’s Alpha = .909

Social Bond, Social Distance, & Procedural Justice Theory
Pre-test and post-test data measuring social distance were collected during 2013, 2014, and 2015 Spring and Fall semesters.

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

26 Females - 13/13; 384 Males - 235/171
Pre-Test: n = 248
Post-Test: n = 184

Purposive sample as youth are selected by juvenile justice or educational administrators based on criteria such as duration in facility, behavior, attendance, academic performance, potential for success, and various characteristics identified as at-risk.

- Burnet Bayland Rehabilitation Center
- Youth Village
- Beechnut Academy
- Lee High School
- Galveston High School
THE POLICE DO THEIR JOB WELL IN FIGHTING CRIME
I RESPECT THE POLICE

I BELIEVE THE POLICE RESPECT ME

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<tr>
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<th>PRE-TEST POSITIVE</th>
<th>POST-TEST POSITIVE</th>
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<td>HISPANIC</td>
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<td>26.2%</td>
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THE POLICE TREAT ALL PEOPLE FAIRLY

POLICE OFFICERS WILL TREAT ME FAIRLY WHEN I GET INTO TROUBLE

FAIRNESS
CONNECTEDNESS

I FEEL CLOSE TO THE POLICE IN MY COMMUNITY

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I FEEL CLOSE TO POLICE OFFICERS

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POLICE OFFICERS WILL LISTEN TO ME WHEN I GET INTO TROUBLE

POLICE OFFICERS WILL HELP ME WHEN I AM IN TROUBLE

BELIEF
ATTACHMENT

I CARE WHAT POLICE OFFICERS THINK OF ME

I DON’T WANT TO DISAPPOINT POLICE OFFICERS BY GETTING INTO TROUBLE
COMPOSITE VARIABLE MEAN (RANGE 4-48)

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$t = -7.651, p = .000$
RESULTS

1. Minority youth are more likely to have negative perceptions of law enforcement than white youth

2. Social Distance is greater between minority youth and law enforcement than white youth and law enforcement

3. TAPS Academy has a statistically significant impact on the social distance between White, African American, and Hispanic youth and law enforcement
FUTURE RESEARCH

• Overall sample size
• Sample size of Female, White, Native American, Asian, & Multi-Racial youth
• Non-adjudicated or purposive Control Group
• Economic, familial, and situational demographic data
• Geographical location
• Long term evaluation ability
REFERENCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

www.tapsacademy.org
www.facebook.com/tapsacademy

Megan Harper – megan@tapsacademy.org
Dr. Penn – epenn@pennpals.net