

Conduct problems in childhood as a predictor of problems during detention

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Developmental taxonomies (Loeber, Moffitt) differentiate between persons with an early beginning of antisocial and delinquent behavior in childhood ("early starters") and such with a beginning of anti-social behavior in adolescence ("late starters"). Both groups differ in their developmental trajectories regarding etiology, risk and protective factors as well as in accessibility to interventions and prognosis. The paper transfers this taxonomy to the clientele in German youth prisons and examines the different trajectories of both groups during detention. Participants of the study were 800 juveniles and young adults, aged 14 to 26 years, from five German detention centres. Analysis show that the groups vary in their adjustment to the prison situation and in their relapse rates. Factors such as aggression and norm-orientation show different patterns during the course of imprisonment and afterwards. Persons with an early beginning of anti-social behavior exhibit more negative affects, problematic relationships, and hostility within prison. This leads to a discussion about theoretical and practical implications for the treatment of juvenile offenders in prison.

Reference

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