

Title: Experiencing Juvenile Justice: A New Juvenile Justice Policy Informed by the Narratives of Young People

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Abstract:

While the logic of the juvenile justice system has changed over the course of the last hundred and fifty years, what has remained tragically consistent is the system's inability to make a difference in the lives of the young people it incarcerates. This study reviews the history of juvenile justice theory and practice nationally and in Rhode Island, and then approaches juvenile justice policy from a perspective absent in most past and present discussions of it – the perspective of young people themselves.

Making use of sixteen extensive interviews with both young people currently incarcerated in the Rhode Island Training School and young people formerly incarcerated in the facility, alongside supplementary interviews and literature from many different disciplines, this study examines how young people first get involved with crime, how the Rhode Island Training School works as a response to juvenile crime, and what responses might work more effectively. Ultimately, this study proposes a deinstitutionalized model of juvenile justice for Rhode Island, and some ideas for how to achieve this reform in the state.