Evaluation of Shifting Gears with Shakespeare

September 2011

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Utah Criminal Justice Center

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
UTAH COMMISSION ON CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE
S.J. QUINNEY COLLEGE OF LAW

Introduction and Background

The Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) asked the Utah Criminal Justice Center (UCJC) to evaluate the Shifting Gears with Shakespeare (SGS) program that was implemented at the Summit County Jail (SCJ) at the beginning of 2010. CCJJ funded the implementation of SGS at SCJ with two cohorts of inmates. In February/March 2010 a female cohort of inmates participated in SGS and in April 2010 a male cohort of inmates participated in SGS. UCJC was tasked with identifying and developing a pre/post test to measure SGS participant changes, identifying an appropriate comparison group of SCJ inmates, and analyzing post-SGS recidivism for one year following jail release.

The SGS program was developed by Barbara McKeown and Becky Harding. The developers provided this description of their program:

> *"Shifting Gears with Shakespeare* was designed to teach cognitive behavior skills to participants using the rich resource of Shakespeare's plays and characters. Since these characters demonstrate the full range of human behaviors and emotions, they provide the perfect backdrop to teach important decision-making skills, while teaching classic literature at the same time... Thus, we aim to enrich the participants' lives by introducing them to the wonderful stories of Shakespeare, while at the same time teaching them how to make good decisions and improve their interpersonal skills."

The curriculum was originally designed to consist of 16 2-hour sessions across an eight (8) week period. Due to time constraints at SCJ and the concern that inmates would not be incarcerated for the entire length of the program, it was condensed into 3.5-hour sessions three (3) times per week over three (3) weeks.

Methods

Sample Selection

SGS Group

The SGS groups were comprised of Summit County Jail (SCJ) inmates who volunteered to participate in the program during its implementation during February to April 2010. The participants signed a participant log and their information was given to researchers to include in the sample. Six (6) female inmates and nine (9) male inmates participated in SGS and completed both pre and post-tests. It should be noted that inmates at SCJ who volunteer to participate in in-jail programming are comprised of those who do not have the privilege of participating in out-of-jail work crews.

Comparison Group

Potential inmates for the comparison group were first identified from two sources: 1) state inmate monthly programming lists, and 2) scanned sign-in sheets from various programs offered at SCJ. Both of these sources were collected for a six month period leading up to the implementation of the SGS program. Inmates who were identified on these lists included SGS participants and additional inmates who had other

programming, but did not participate in SGS. Examples of the types of programming identified on these lists are: recovery groups, 12-step, and GED. All programming at SCJ is voluntary; therefore, the potential comparison group would be comprised of other jail inmates who had volunteered for other programs and were not (at the time) in out-of-jail work crews. Although these lists were used as the starting place to identify potential comparison group members, these records were not recorded consistently enough to be included as a covariate of other program participation during the study period.

Inmates on these lists who were in SCJ around the same time as the SGS participants were identified and their information was sent to staff at SCJ for their qualifying jail booking (QB) and demographic information. This process resulted in nine (9) potential female comparison group members and 29 potential male comparison group members. They were compared with SGS participants on demographics and QB information (percent who were Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) inmates and length of stay). The two female groups were roughly equivalent, and due to small sample sizes it was determined that all female inmates would stay in the study sample. The male SGS participants had between 63 and 516 days in SCJ on their qualifying booking (QB), while the comparison group ranged from one (1) to 516 days in SCJ on their QB. Comparison males were removed if they were in the jail for less than 60 days during their QB, to make that group more comparable to the SGS males. This resulted in a final male comparison sample of 20 inmates.

As shown in Table 1, the final comparison groups are slightly younger and include more minorities than the two SGS groups. The two female groups are roughly equivalent on percent that were in SCJ as a UDC inmate and length of stay. The two male groups are also roughly equivalent on those measures, with just over half of each group comprised of UDC inmates and an average length of stay over 200 days.

Table 1 Study Sample

	Female SGS	Female Comparison	Male SGS	Male Comparison
Sample Size (n)	6	10	9	20
Minority (%)	0	40	0	30
Age at QB[1]	31.9 (8.6)	30.5 (11.4)	34.8 (8.3)	32.0 (7.6)
UDC Inmates (%)	17	30	67	60
QB Length of Stay	139 (64)	123 (132)	225 (142)	240 (114)
[1]Means and Standard Deviations (Mn (SD)) are recorded, except where percents indicated				

Jail and Criminal History Records

Staff at SCJ provided information for the study sample on booking and release date for each person's qualifying booking (QB), whether the inmate was under UDC custody, and any new contacts the offenders had with SCJ following QB release through 8/1/2011. New types of contact with SCJ included new arrests from Summit County Sheriff's Office that did not result in jail bookings and bookings for new charges, failures to appear (FTA), commitments, and probation violations. SCJ also provided names, DOBs, and other identifiers (state ID's, (SIDs)) that allowed for a query of the statewide criminal history database at the Bureau of Criminal Identification (BCI). Information on all 45 study participants was sent to BCI and lifetime criminal history records through 6/9/2011 were provided for the sample to compare criminal histories and post-QB recidivism.

Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) records were queried by SID for the study sample for records on legal status changes (e.g., not supervised, probation, parole, inmate) and body location (e.g., discharged, prison unit, jail name, AP&P office, etc.). This query resulted in a match on 41 of the 45 offenders in the

2

sample. The four offenders who did not match with UDC records by SID were hand searched by UDC staff on multiple combinations of name, date of birth, and SSNs. They were not located in UDC records. These four offenders, two SGS males, one comparison male, and one comparison female were excluded from the UDC analyses. UDC records were used to indicate which offenders were on additional supervision in the follow-up period and/or had their opportunity for reoffense limited due to being incarcerated at another facility. UDC records were also used to identify recidivism as new offenses being referred to UDC for screening or a parole/probation violation.

Survey Development

The Pre/Post tests implemented for the Shifting Gears with Shakespeare (SGS) evaluation were modified from the *Self Rating at Intake* and *Evaluation of Self and Treatment* surveys developed by the Institute of Behavioral Research at Texas Christian University.[1] Minimal wording (e.g., replacing "counselors" with "teachers") and item changes were made to make the surveys more appropriate for evaluating the SGS program. The Pre/Post surveys covered nine areas, which are listed below with example items.

1. Anxiety - "You feel tense or keyed-up."
2. Decision Making – "You consider how your actions will affect others"
3. Depression – "You worry or brood a lot."
4. Hostility – "You have urges to fight or hurt others."
5. Self Efficacy Scale (Pearlin Mastery) – "What happens to you in the future mostly depends on you."
6. Risk Taking – "You like to take chances."
7. Social Conformity – "You feel honesty is required in every situation."
8. Self Esteem – "You have much to be proud of."
9. Treatment Readiness – "You have too many outside responsibilities now to be in this treatment program."

The Post test also included six ratings of participant satisfaction with the program and their experiences with the staff and the group process. The following are the six ratings categories with example items.

1. Counselor Competence – "Your teachers help you develop confidence in yourself."
2. Counselor Rapport – "Your teachers respect you and your opinions."
3. Personal Progress – "You have made progress in understanding your feelings and how they can influence behavior."
4. Program Staff – "The corrections staff cares about you and your problems." and "The teachers care about you and your problems."
5. Therapeutic Engagement – "You give honest feedback to others during sessions."
6. Trust Group – "You trust other participants in this program."

Items were rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) with some items reverse coded. Scores for the nine scales and six ratings were calculated by averaging scores across all the items in the scale and multiplying that number by 10. Therefore, the lowest score possible is 10, while the highest score possible is 70. As expected, higher scores are desired on the positive scales (e.g., Decision Making, Self Esteem), while lower scores are desired on the negative scales (e.g., Risk Taking, Hostility).

---

[1] http://www.ibr.tcu.edu/pubs/datacoll/cjforms.html

<center>**Results**</center>

Sample Characteristics

As previously noted in the *Sample Selection* section of this report, the comparison groups were slightly younger and included more minorities than the SGS groups (see Table 1). However, the SGS and comparison groups were roughly equivalent on the percent that were Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) inmates and their average length of stay at SCJ (again, see Table 1).

Criminal History

As shown in the following table (Table 2), the female comparison group was younger, on average, than the female SGS group at the time of their first arrest and had fewer prior arrests. The male comparison group had a more severe criminal history than the male SGS group, as indicated by both a younger average age at first arrest and more prior arrest events. Arrest events are defined as separate arrest dates in the BCI criminal history record; therefore, an average of 6.5 prior arrest events is just over six prior dates of arrest (not simply six prior offenses, which could have occurred on a single arrest date).

The two female groups were roughly equivalent on type of prior offenses, with both having primarily property offenses. The female comparison group had more drug offenders, but when DUI offenders were combined with drug offenders in the female SGS group, the percents were similar. The two male groups were similar on prior offense types, with the majority of both groups being drug offenders and over half also having person and property offenses. Across all four groups, the most severe prior offense was a felony.

<center>**Table 2** Criminal History</center>

	Female SGS	Female Comparison	Male SGS	Male Comparison
Age at First Arrest	26.6 (6.9)	23.8 (6.5)	27.1 (8.5)	21.5 (4.5)
Number of Prior Arrest Events	6.5 (4.8)	3.4 (3.4)	5.2 (3.6)	9.0 (6.4)
Number of Arrest Events (3-yrs Prior)	2.8 (2.1)	1.4 (1.3)	2.3 (0.8)	2.8 (1.8)
Percent with prior:				
Drug Offense	33	70	78	85
Person Offense	33	20	56	60
Property Offense	83	70	56	70
Weapon Offense	0	0	11	15
DUI Offense	33	0	44	55
Sex Offense	0	0	33	0

[1]Means and Standard Deviations (Mn (SD)) are recorded, except where percents indicated

Survey Results

Fifteen (15) SGS participants completed Pre/Post test surveys. The six (6) females completed the pre-test at the beginning of the SGS program on 2/25/10 and the post-test at the end of the program on 3/6/10. The male cohort (n = 9) completed the pre-test on 4/8/10 and the post-test on 4/22/10.

As shown in the figure below (Figure 1), statistically significant positive changes were observed on four of the nine scales in paired samples t-tests when both male and female cohorts were examined together. The only scale to show a negative change was "Depression," with significantly more participants overall (as well

as male and female when each group was examined separately) self-reporting feelings of depression at the post-test than the pre-test. This increased reporting could be due to greater awareness of depression at the post-test. The remaining four scales showed positive changes that did not reach statistical significance when both groups were examined together. Improvements in Treatment Readiness were statistically significant when the female cohort was examined separately. Due to small sample size, some differences may not reach statistical significance.

Figure 1 SGS Pre/Post Test Results
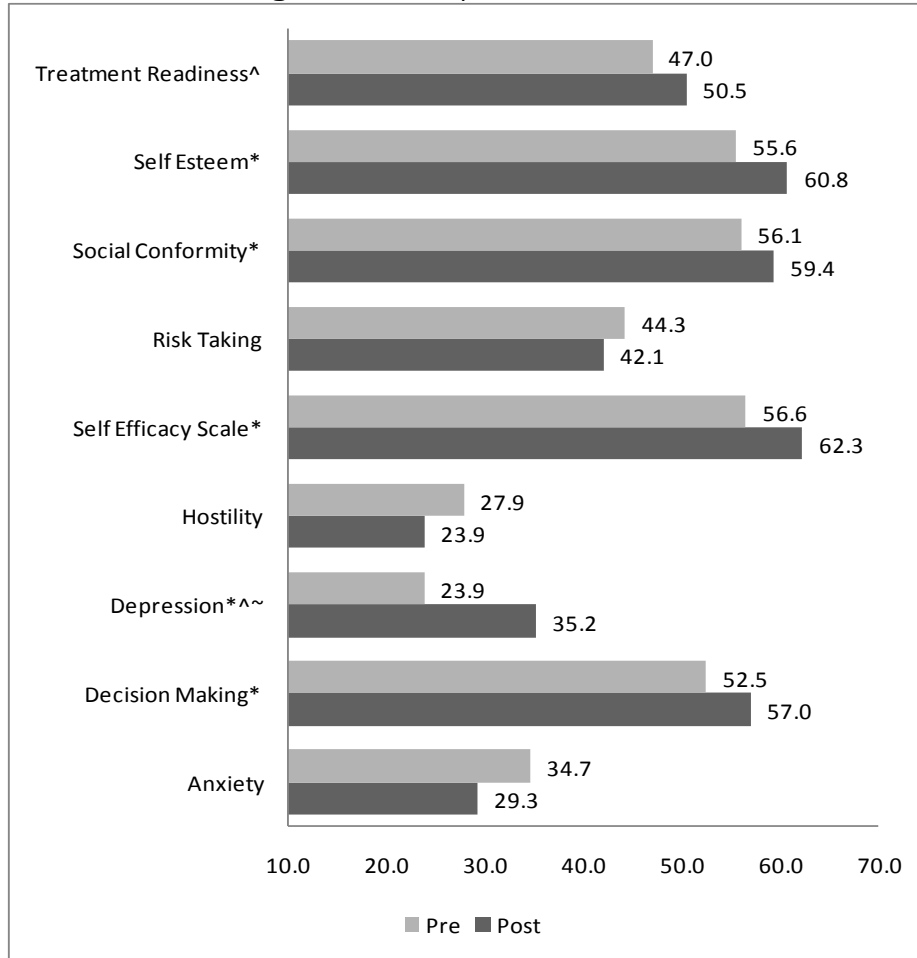
*Pre/Post test difference is statistically significant at p < .05
^ Pre/Post difference is stat. sig. in Female Group
~ Pre/Post difference is stat. sig. in Male Group

Satisfaction with the SGS program was very high for both male and female participants, with average ratings above 60 (out of 70 total points) on four of the six scales. As shown in Figure 2, the two lowest rated areas were Trust Group and Program Staff. The Program Staff rating included participants' ratings of the corrections staff at the Summit County Jail (SCJ), with items that asked if they were "helpful" to the participant and "cared about them and their problems." These items may not be appropriate to the rating of the SGS program in the SCJ, as corrections staff operations are geared toward the safety and functioning of the jail, rather than the therapeutic milieu of the program. The Trust Group rating included items that asked if the participant trusted the teachers, corrections staff, and other participants, as well as if they had "developed positive trusting friendships while at this program." The two ratings that asked specifically

about the SGS staff (Counselor Competence and Counselor Rapport) were rated very highly with an average of over 65 out of 70 points.

Figure 2 SGS Program Satisfaction at Exit
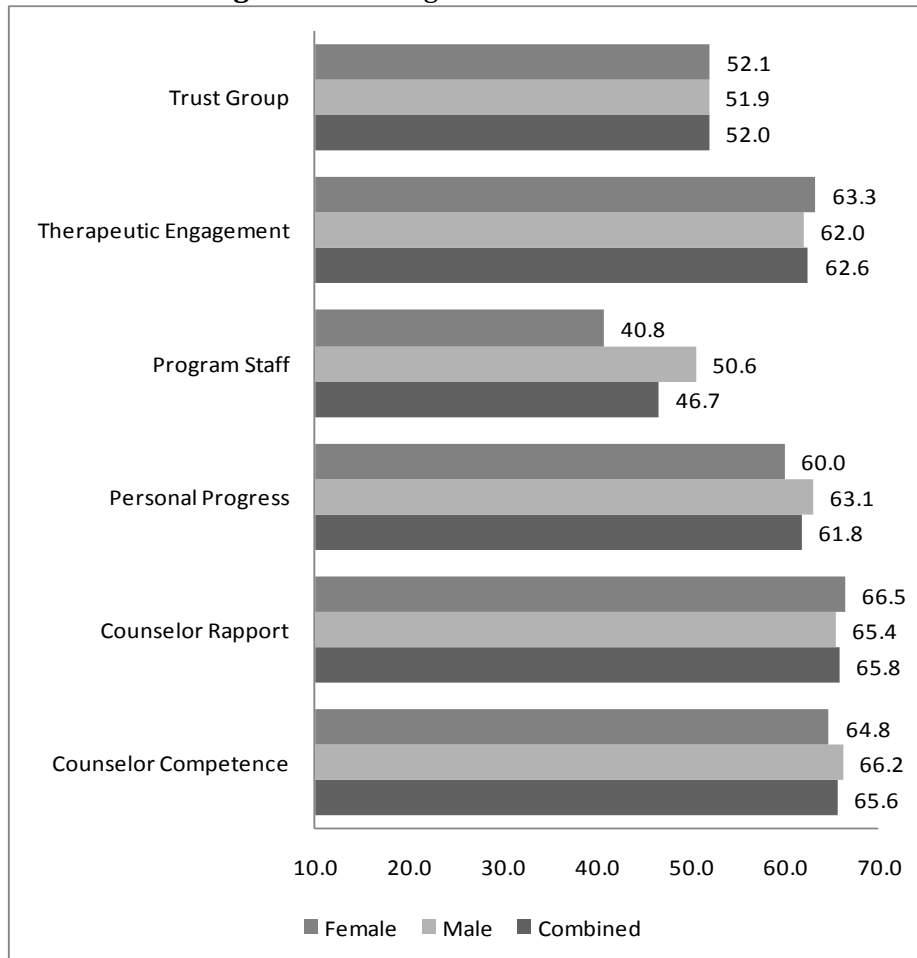
Recidivism

Recidivism data was collected from three sources: SCJ, BCI, and UDC. Due to the small sample size and pre-existing group differences, it was important to track as many potential measures of recidivism as possible. SCJ and BCI recidivism was calculated for all study participants, except one male SGS participant who was still an inmate at SCJ on 8/1/2011. After reviewing UDC data and subsequent jail/prison transfers it was found that an additional male SGS participant and a male comparison offender were still incarcerated at the time of the study (September 2011). Therefore, combined recidivism presented at the end of Table 3 is out of all female SGS and comparison offenders, seven of nine (78%) SGS male offenders and 19 of 20 (95%) male comparison offenders.

Summit County Jail Recidivism

As shown in Table 3, only one person (a male comparison offender) was booked into the SCJ on a new charge following the qualifying booking release. Half of the female SGS group (n = 3) and two male comparison offenders had a new failure to appear (FTA) booking, while two male comparison offenders

UCJC Evaluation of SGS
September 2011

also had new bookings for probation violations. Average follow-up time from jail release to when SCJ data was queried for this study (August 2011), was just over one year for both male groups and slightly longer for both female groups.

BCI Recidivism

BCI recidivism was tracked to early June 2011, on average just under a year from SCJ release for male offenders and just over a year for female offenders. As shown in Table 3, no SGS participants had a new arrest recorded in BCI records, while four female comparison offenders did and six male comparison offenders did. However, this comparison does not take into account those who may have been incarcerated at another facility during the follow-up period and/or those who were on supervision. Therefore, UDC records were examined as a final measure of recidivism/contact with the criminal justice system.

UDC Recidivism

As noted in the Methods section, all study participants, except four (one female comparison offender, two male SGS, and one male comparison) were identified in UDC records. UDC recidivism is presented in Table 3 for those 41study participants who were identified in UDC records. Average follow-up in UDC records was shorter than that calculated from SCJ records, as it was possible to identify which offenders had a shortened "time at risk" for recidivism in the community, due to being transferred to another jail or prison facility at the time of their release from SCJ. As shown in Table 3, half of SGS males, 30% of male comparisons, and 20% of female comparisons spent time in another facility at the time of their SCJ release. In fact, male SGS participants spent an average of 124 days in another facility following SCJ release, thus limiting their opportunity for re-offense in the short follow-up period. In fact, when combined with SCJ data, two (2) of the nine (9) SGS males were still incarcerated at the time of the study, therefore, potential recidivism for SGS males could only be calculated for seven (7) participants.

One SGS female and one SGS male had new referrals to UDC since exiting SCJ for new offenses, while no comparison offenders did. One SGS female, one comparison female, one SGS male, and two male comparisons had a new prison commitment following SCJ release. All prison commitments included a probation/parole violation; however, they may have also included new offenses.

Combined Recidivism

Lastly, combined recidivism for new technical violations (e.g., FTA bookings at SCJ, prison commitments for violations, etc.) and new offenses (e.g., new charge bookings at CJS, BCI arrests, new arrests/referrals in UDC records) were calculated. As shown at the bottom of Table 3, more SGS females had technical violations than comparison females; however, they had lower new offense rates. This is likely due to reduced opportunity for re-offense, as most with technical violations would have resulted in a return to jail or prison. Male SGS participants had slightly lower technical violation and new offense rates than comparison males; however, it should be noted that male SGS recidivism figures are only calculated for those seven (7) who had any follow-up period. In addition, their follow-up period was about 80 days shorter on average.

UCJC Evaluation of SGS
September 2011

Table 3 Recidivism

	Female SGS	Female Comparison	Male SGS	Male Comparison
Summit County Jail Recidivism				
Post-QB SCJ Follow-Up (in days)	480 (43)	633 (121)	378 (97)	382 (117)
New Charge (%)	0	0	0	5
Failure to Appear (FTA) (%)	50	0	0	10
Commitment (%)	0	0	0	0
Probation Violation (%)	0	0	0	10
BCI Recidivism				
Post-QB BCI Follow-Up (in days)	420 (43)	573 (121)	318 (97)	322 (117)
New BCI Arrest (%)	0	40	0	30
Days to New Arrest	--	202 (121)	--	146 (114)
Percent with new:				
Drug Offense		0		15
Person Offense		20		15
Property Offense		10		10
Weapon Offense		0		0
DUI Offense		10		5
Sex Offense		0		0
UDC Recidivism				
Found in UDC Records (%)	100	90	78	95
Post-QB UDC Follow-Up (in days in the community (not incarcerated))	508 (43)	634 (130)	282 (160)	360 (158)
Transferred to Jail/Prison at QB Release (%)	0	20	50	30
Days in another facility at release	--	26 (72)	124 (174)	50 (99)
On AP&P Supervision at release (%)	67	33	43	53
New Referral for new offense (%)	17	0	14	0
Prison Commitment – any reason (%)	17	11	14	11
Combined Recidivism				
Any Violation/FTA (%)	50	20	14	21
Any New Offense/Arrest (%)	17	40	14	37

[1]Means and Standard Deviations (Mn (SD)) are recorded, except where percents indicated

Discussion and Conclusion

The preliminary Pre/Post test findings demonstrate early positive changes in eight of the nine scales, as well as positive ratings of the SGS staff by participants. Recidivism data, however, provides an inconclusive picture of whether or not these short-term measures of success can be linked to more distal outcomes, such as reductions in criminal behavior. There is no clear picture from the early recidivism data collected from the three sources (SCJ, BCI & UDC). However, it appears that SGS females committed a high rate (50%) of technical violations and that these may have precluded further criminal activity, as those offenders would have received jail or prison time following their violations. Male SGS participants had a slightly lower recidivism and technical violation rate than comparison males; however, only seven of the nine SGS males were tracked (the other two were still in custody at the time of the study). Additionally, SGS males were

tracked for a somewhat shorter follow-up period than the male comparison group (also less than a year on average), and some important group differences were noted between the SGS males and the available comparison group (e.g., fewer minority, older current age, older age at first arrest, and fewer prior arrests).

Study Limitations

This study had several important limitations that should be considered when reviewing the data comparisons between the four groups. First is the biased selection of both the SGS and comparison groups. The SGS groups were volunteers to the program and the comparison groups were comprised of other available offenders at SCJ around the time of the study. Several measures of demographics and criminal history showed that the groups were not equivalent. The next limitation is the pre/post design. The participants in the study were identified because of their recent and active involvement in the criminal justice system (as indicated by a booking in the SCJ). This study design is unable to determine if a reduction in offending during the "post" period is due to SGS participation, SCJ incarceration, some other intervening factor(s), or simply regressing toward a more "average" rate of involvement in the criminal justice system. A relatively short follow-up period and extremely small sample size are two additional limitations of this study. Because of these limitations, it would not be advisable to generalize this study's findings to a larger or different population of offenders.

Recommendations

SGS implementation and study replication is necessary to determine if SGS can be an effective intervention with offenders. At this time the study's findings are too preliminary and due to the fact that they are tied to a small, specific sample, they cannot be generalized to other offender populations. In addition, it would be valuable to conduct a process evaluation that would identify whether or not the program components and curriculum of SGS are in compliance with the cognitive behavioral therapy model (CBT) foundations that it was designed to include.