



# OJJDP FACT SHEET

Shay Bilchik, Administrator

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## Causes and Correlates of Delinquency Program

by Katharine Browning, Ph.D., David Huizinga, Ph.D., Rolf Loeber, Ph.D., and Terence P. Thornberry, Ph.D.

The Program of Research on the Causes and Correlates of Delinquency (Causes and Correlates) comprises three coordinated longitudinal projects: the Denver Youth Survey, directed by David Huizinga at the University of Colorado; the Pittsburgh Youth Study, directed by Rolf Loeber, Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, and David Farrington at the University of Pittsburgh; and the Rochester Youth Development Study, directed by Terence P. Thornberry at the University at Albany, State University of New York. Initiated in 1986 by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), the Causes and Correlates projects are designed to improve the understanding of serious delinquency, violence, and drug use by examining how youth develop within the context of family, school, peers, and community. This Fact Sheet provides a brief overview of the research design used by the projects and describes the sample used by each project.

### Research Design

The Causes and Correlates projects all use a similar research design. All of the projects are longitudinal investigations involving repeated contacts with youth during a substantial portion of their developmental years. In each project, researchers conduct individual, face-to-face interviews with inner-city youth considered at high risk for involvement in delinquency and drug abuse. Multiple perspectives on each child's development and behavior are obtained through interviews with the child's primary caretaker and, in two sites, through interviews with teachers. In addition to interview data, the studies collect extensive information from official agencies, including police, courts, schools, and social services.

### The Denver Youth Survey

The Denver Youth Survey is based on a random sample of households in high-risk neighborhoods of Denver, CO. The survey respondents include 1,527 children and youth (806 boys and 721 girls) who were 7, 9, 11, 13, or 15 years old in 1987

and who lived in 1 of the more than 20,000 households randomly selected from disadvantaged neighborhoods with high crime rates. Interviews with the youth and one caretaker were conducted annually from 1988 to 1992; this process resumed in 1995 and will continue through 1999. The project has a high rate of retention, with completion rates of 91 to 93 percent in the first 5 years and a constant 80-percent rate for the 1995-98 period.

### The Pittsburgh Youth Study

The Pittsburgh Youth Study began with a random sample of boys in the first, fourth, and seventh grades of the Pittsburgh, PA, public school system. Information from the initial screening was used to select the top 30 percent of boys with the most disruptive behavior. This group of boys, together with a random sample of the remaining 70 percent who showed less disruptive behavior, became the sample for the study. The sample contains approximately 500 boys at each grade level, for a total of 1,517 boys. Each student and a primary caregiver were interviewed at 6-month intervals for the first 5 years of the study; teacher ratings of the student were also obtained. The middle sample (fourth grade) was discontinued after seven assessments. The youngest sample (first grade) and oldest sample (seventh grade) are currently being interviewed at annual intervals, with totals of 16 and 14 assessments, respectively. The study has been highly successful in retaining participants, with a retention rate of at least 85 percent for each assessment.

### The Rochester Youth Development Study

The Rochester Youth Development Study sample consists of 1,000 students (729 boys and 271 girls) who were in the seventh and eighth grades of the Rochester, NY, public schools during the spring semester of the 1988 school year. Males were oversampled because they are more likely than females to engage in serious delinquency and students from high-crime areas were oversampled based on the assumption that they are at greater risk for offending. This project is a 12-wave prospective panel study in

which members of the sample and one of their parents were interviewed at 6-month intervals from 1988 to 1992 and at annual intervals from 1994 to 1996. At the end of wave 12, in spring 1997, 846 of the initial 1,000 subjects were reinterviewed (a retention rate of 85 percent); the retention rate for parents was 83 percent.

## Common Measures

The Causes and Correlates program represents a milestone in criminological research because it constitutes the largest shared-measurement approach ever achieved in delinquency research. The three research teams worked together to ensure that certain core measures were identical across the sites, including self-reported delinquency and drug use; community and neighborhood characteristics; youth, family, and peer variables; and arrest and judicial processing histories.

## For Further Information

The following OJJDP publications on related topics are available: *Developmental Pathways in Boys' Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior*, *Epidemiology of Serious Violence*, *In the Wake of Childhood Maltreatment*, and *Gang Members and Delinquent Behavior*. In addition, reports highlighting the findings from the

first 10 years of each Causes and Correlates study are being developed. Future publications about Causes and Correlates research will address such issues as the impact of family transitions on delinquency, juvenile victims of violence, and protective factors for youth in high-risk neighborhoods.

To obtain copies of OJJDP publications, contact the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, 800-638-8736 (phone), 301-519-5212 (fax), [puborder@ncjrs.org](mailto:puborder@ncjrs.org) (e-mail), [www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org](http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org) (Internet).

Katharine Browning is the Program Manager for the three Causes and Correlates projects in OJJDP's Research and Program Development Division. David Huizinga is the Principal Investigator for the Denver Youth Survey. Rolf Loeber is the Principal Investigator for the Pittsburgh Youth Study. Terence P. Thornberry is the Principal Investigator for the Rochester Youth Development Study.

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