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## Youth Gangs in Rural America

*by Ralph A. Weisheit and L. Edward Wells*

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*Lessons Learned Through the Criminal Justice  
System Project***

**The Campbell Collaboration: Helping  
To Understand “What Works”**  
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JR 000251

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Ask the average person to describe a location where youth gangs can be found, and he or she will probably conjure up a gritty inner-city neighborhood. In recent years, though, gangs and their associated problems have been reported in the most rural areas. How serious is the problem of gangs in rural America? And how does the problem differ from that presented by urban gangs?

The cover story in this issue of the *NIJ Journal* attempts to answer these questions. Ralph A. Weisheit and L. Edward Wells conducted a two-part investigation into the characteristics of rural youth gangs. They first analyzed data from the National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS), which has been conducted since 1996. By merging this data with economic and demographic information from other sources, they were able to paint a clearer picture of where gangs are located, who their members are, and the factors that lead to their appearance in rural areas. Phase 2 of the study consisted of telephone interviews with police agencies in nonmetropolitan counties reporting the presence of at least one gang through the NYGS. These interviews helped the researchers define the parameters of precisely what the terms "gangs" and "gang members" mean.

On the whole, there were a lot of surprises, and quite a bit of good news. Rural gangs unexpectedly (and unlike their urban counterparts) tend to thrive in times of economic resurgence. They also tend to be made up primarily of local youth, although families that move from the city with their gang-affiliated teens do help to spread the trappings of gang culture (like wearing "colors" and marking territory with graffiti). The encouraging news is that many rural gangs don't seem to last, disappearing from the landscape as the bulk of their membership grows up or leaves town. The researchers suggest that the differences between rural and urban gangs require that those dealing with rural gangs need new ways to think about and contend with them.

Also in this issue are an explanation of the "Top Twelve" ways to ensure a successful collaboration of disparate law enforcement agencies; a report on the Crime and Justice Group of the Campbell Collaboration, which is gathering a database of criminal justice research reviews based on the model developed in the field of physical medicine; and an overview of the Data Resources Program, NIJ's long-standing program to help researchers locate data from previous NIJ-funded studies so they can reanalyze or expand upon earlier findings.



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# Youth Gangs in Rural America

by Ralph A. Weisheit and L. Edward Wells

## About the Authors

Ralph A. Weisheit, Ph.D., is a distinguished professor of criminal justice at Illinois State University. L. Edward Wells, Ph.D., is a professor in the Department of Criminal Justice Sciences, Illinois State University. This article is adapted from their final report to NIJ, *Gangs in Rural America*, grant number 99-IJ-CX-0036, available from NCJRS (NCJ 190228).

The prevailing image of youth gangs—with their symbols, colors, and territorial graffiti—is that they are found in the poorest neighborhoods of America's large cities. Certainly, they are. In recent years, however, such gangs also have been popping up in outlying rural areas, far away from urban decay. A number of assumptions about these rural gangs are popular in the criminal justice research literature. For example, researchers commonly believe that once a youth gang establishes itself in an area, it will be around for quite some time.

A study focused on the numbers and locations of gangs in rural America reveals that this and many other assumptions about rural

youth gangs are inaccurate. The data also show that gang activity in rural America is not as extensive as many fear. Lastly, the research indicates that rural gangs are unlike urban ones in many respects; one of the most surprising findings was that gang activity in rural areas rises rather than falls during times of economic recovery.

The differences between urban and rural gangs strongly suggest that the policies and practices aimed at suppressing urban gangs may not be the best approaches in nonurban areas. A different set of strategies must be created, directed squarely at the unique characteristics of rural youth gangs.

## Counting Rural Gangs

Both researchers and the popular press suggest that gangs are increasingly becoming a problem in rural areas, but scientific consideration of this idea is limited. The National Youth Gang Crime Center conducts

the only annual survey of gang data using a representative national sample that includes a substantial number of rural jurisdictions. National Youth Gang Surveys (NYGS) have shown that gang problems are occurring in communities of all sizes and locations, although they are still most heavily concentrated in medium and large cities.

This study merged NYGS data with economic, demographic, and other data concerning the same geographic areas, so the factors associated with the presence of rural youth gangs could be analyzed. Agencies in rural counties also were contacted for additional information about gang-related problems not included in the NYGS data. (See “What Is a Gang?”)

## WHAT IS A GANG?

Phase 2 of the Gangs in Rural America study consisted of a telephone survey of municipal and county police agencies in nonmetropolitan U.S. counties that reported the presence of at least one gang in the 1997 National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS). The authors did not provide any precise definition of a gang to the people being interviewed, but consistent with NYGS, it was clear that the focus was on youth gangs and not adult gangs. The authors also made a distinction between mere groups of youth and gangs, with the latter having a higher degree of organization and structure. Beyond these general distinctions, representatives of each agency defined “gangs” for themselves.

As an illustration of how complex the concept of gangs can be, particularly when applied to rural areas, several survey respondents indicated that there were no gangs in their community, only gang members. As one respondent put it:

We don't really have any gangs that are centered here in our community, because we just don't have that large of a community. But we have some that are members of gangs in surrounding communities and, occasionally, they come over here.

For purposes of this study, such communities were categorized as not having gangs, but it would be easy to argue otherwise.

### Gang Indicators

Agencies taking part in the survey used several indicators of gang presence in their communities. Perhaps the most frequent indicator was self-identification by youths. Respondents also frequently used the presence of graffiti and tattoos, the wearing of gang colors, and the judgment of criminal justice officials that some youths were gang members.

In a number of jurisdictions, any one of these indicators might, by itself, be used by local agencies as evidence of the presence of a gang. Other jurisdictions were more selective, requiring several indicators. A few jurisdictions used guidelines established by their States. Some of the

agencies reported using relatively detailed and concrete indicators, while others used criteria that were more vague and impressionistic (such as, “...well, I don't know, I just look at them”). Relying on outward signs of gang membership has become more problematic as many gangs attempt to keep a low profile by not displaying signs, tattoos, or colors—something that many agencies thought was becoming more common.

Questions about the types of problems associated with gangs led to a wide range of responses. In some jurisdictions, having a gang problem meant nothing more than the presence of graffiti, while in others there were reports of murders committed by gang members. Of the agencies reporting the presence of a gang, nearly all believed that at least some gang members used drugs, sold drugs, and engaged in violence (though respondents were seldom able to differentiate actions engaged in by individual gang members from activities orchestrated by the gang). When asked to list the gang-related problems agencies had experienced, the most frequent responses were drugs, assaults, thefts, and burglaries.

### Seriousness

Despite reports of drugs, assaults, drive-by shootings, and even homicides, only 43 percent of those reporting gangs described the gang problem in their community as “serious.” And some of those describing the problem as serious qualified their rating with such comments as:

In a small town like this, our little gangs, to the people [here], are serious. But to the big city, this would be minor.

Well, again, the problem is significant for us, but I suppose if you were comparing it to an urban environment it would be minimal.

Although drug use and drug sales were common among gang members and periodic violence was evident, most of the observed gang problems (such as graffiti, parties, and alcohol consumption) were of a type that would, indeed, frequently be viewed as minor.

### Three Levels of Gang Problems

The study data divided the nonmetropolitan jurisdictions into three categories (as shown in figure 1): about 23 percent reported persistent gang problems; 57 percent reported a persistent absence of gangs; and approximately 20 percent reported transitory or temporary gang problems. Of the agencies with transitory gang problems, more than half (58 percent) reported gangs in 1996 but not in 1998—raising questions about the commonly held belief that once gangs have a foothold in a community it is rare for them to leave or disappear. Indeed, most rural youth gangs are so small and unstable that the loss of one or two members—through arrest, movement out of the area, or maturation—can easily mean the end of the gang.

When asked if there were currently problems with youth gangs in their jurisdiction, only 41 percent of the agencies reporting a gang in 1997 reported the presence of a gang in 2000. This figure is substantially lower than would be expected if gangs were pervasive and persistent in rural areas. Further, of the nonmetropolitan agencies reporting gangs in 1997, the more rural the jurisdiction, the less likely they were to continue to report gangs in 2000, as shown in figure 2.

### Concerns Raised by Findings

The numbers in figure 2 suggest several possible concerns. First, it may be that gangs in rural areas are relatively ephemeral and transitory phenomena whose characteristics may change considerably over time,

**Figure 1: Agency Reports of Gang Status, by Type of County**

	Metropolitan	Nonmetropolitan
Stable—No Gangs, 1996–98	28.4%	57.0%
Transitory Gangs, 1996–98	18.2%	20.4%
Chronic Gangs, 1996–98	53.4%	22.6%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Number of Agencies	1,333	829

**Figure 2: Reports of Gangs by Rurality of Jurisdiction**

Rurality of County in Which Jurisdiction is Located	Number Reporting Gangs	Percentage Reporting Gangs
Nonmetropolitan with:		
Urban population of 20,000 or more	51 of 88 agencies	58%
Urban population of 2,500 to 19,999	31 of 97 agencies	32%
Completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population	4 of 28 agencies	14%

Number of Cases = 213. All agencies had reported the presence of gangs in 1997. The figures above reflect the number/percentage still reporting gangs in 2000.



even in a short span of 2 or 3 years. Second, police reports may not be consistent or reliable sources of data on gang events; the problem may be unclear police definitions of what gangs involve or inconsistent reporting of gang activity by small rural agencies. Third, the conventional conceptualization of gangs in urban terms may not apply in a meaningful way to less urbanized settings. It is also possible that the unexpected pattern of results may reflect some combination of all three factors.

### Prosperity Invites Gangs

Urban gang theories based on economic deprivation do not appear to apply to non-metropolitan areas. In fact, gangs were more likely to be reported in areas experiencing economic growth. The authors suggest that this may be because economic growth brings inner-city families to outlying areas. Then, as parents with gang-affiliated children leave the city to find jobs in rural areas, the culture of gangs is transported with them.

### Most Gangs in Rural Areas Are Homegrown

The single most important predictor of gang activity in a primarily rural county was the percentage of the county's population that lived in an "urban" area (that is, an incorporated area of 2,500 or more people). Urbanization—the physical sprawl of a city's de facto boundaries into outlying areas—seems to have an influence in and of itself, distinct from the poor economic conditions or social disengagement often associated with big city life.

A common argument for how gangs appear in rural areas is that they, like other aspects of urban life, spread out (or "diffuse") from the nearest metropolitan area. Rural areas connected to the city by a highway are thus thought to be at greatest risk, and the study did find a correlation between the presence

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of gangs in an area and the proximity of that area to a highway. However, when a multivariable analysis was conducted comparing numerous factors with the presence of gangs in an area, this factor proved to be insignificant.

Although some researchers theorize that gangs spread from urban to rural areas through a process in which urban gang members themselves migrate to rural areas, others have posited that only the symbols and culture of the gang are exported to rural communities. The study found some support for this notion. When the authors asked rural law enforcement agencies how many gang members in their area had come from outside the area, the results were mixed; the estimated number of current gang members who came into the area from another jurisdiction varied from "none" to "all of them." However, most estimates ranged between 10 and 30 percent. So in most rural areas reporting gang activity, the majority of gang members were local youth. Yet, in many jurisdictions, the impact of migrating gang members was substantially greater than their limited numbers alone would suggest; they became an important conduit for the movement of ideas and symbols into these areas.

## Migration of Gang Members

Officials gave a variety of reasons for why gang youth moved into their areas. Most moved for family reasons; that is, they moved along with their families or moved in with relatives. Still, the other reasons cited—expanding drug markets and other illegal activities, avoiding police, and seeking to get away from gang influences—occurred frequently enough that the authors could not formulate a single model of urban gang member migration.

## Community Strength Discourages Gangs

The percentage of county residents who worked outside of their home county was a good predictor of gang activity. Unexpectedly, counties with the *most* people who commuted to work outside the county were *less* likely to report gangs. This could be based on the degree of community commitment and involvement among local residents; perhaps people willing to drive to another county to work while maintaining their current residence are highly committed to the community in which they live.

## Law Enforcement Reaction

Rural agencies appear to be ready to deal with gangs. Most had at least some officers with gang training. Among agencies reporting gang problems, 52 percent reported a “great” interest in additional gang-related training, 35 percent wanted technical assistance in dealing with their gang problem, and 28 percent wanted assistance in forming a gang task force.

The most frequent agency response to gang activity was suppression through strict enforcement—“zero tolerance,” a style one might easily associate with urban police. Many agencies suggested that zero

tolerance policies are easier to apply in smaller communities where gang members stand out and where police officers, prosecutors, probation officers, and judges may have close working relationships.

For many agencies, strict enforcement against current gang members was accompanied by a more tempered approach to potential gang members. Many agencies stressed the importance of prevention and of working with the community. The agencies reserved harsh criminal penalties for outsiders engaged in gang activity and insiders deemed beyond redemption. For youth with strong bonds to the local community and/or those perceived as having some hope of change, the agencies emphasized community and family pressure and prevention measures.

## Concepts for Further Study

This study illustrates that urban models of gang development do not apply everywhere. This is an important first step in the development of more explicit models of gangs in smaller cities and rural areas. The study’s findings confirm the view that in nonmetropolitan areas, a different approach needs to be taken by criminal justice systems dealing with the problem of youth gangs.

NCJ 204516

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## What Does It Take to Make Collaboration Work? *Lessons Learned Through the Criminal Justice System Project*

### Editor's Note

The Criminal Justice System Project was a 3-year effort by the National Institute of Corrections to help State and local policy-makers develop a method of working together on corrections issues. This article is adapted from an unpublished evaluation report on the project, "Criminal Justice System Project, Interim Report of Evaluation Findings," by Policy Studies, Inc., conducted under NIJ grant number 97-IJ-CX-0056.

**W**hat does it take to create and sustain an efficient and effective collaboration? One with lots of partners, different points of view, and potentially controversial subject matter?

Even with the challenges of multiple partners and shared decisionmaking, research suggests that collaboration is worth the investment. The Criminal Justice System Project (CJSP) evaluation, completed by Policy Studies, Inc., for NIJ, highlights the value of collaboration and provides practical tips

on how to make the collaborative process more efficient and more likely to produce favorable outcomes. These ideas can help ensure that collaboration will make the best use of a very valuable resource—time.

### Here are the Top Twelve Lessons Learned:

**Lesson 1: Ensure that the people or the group in charge is officially sanctioned and authorized to make decisions for the criminal justice system.**

It is imperative for the leaders or lead team in a project of this nature to be authorized to make decisions and act on them. The sanctioning and authority may come from the State legislature or from a local governing body such as a county commission. Lack of

## THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM PROJECT

In January 1997, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) began a 3-year Criminal Justice System Project (CJSP) that emerged from a 1993 strategic planning process where the main priority was to develop an effective system of correctional sanctions. The project was run under the direction of the Center for Effective Public Policy (CEPP) and was evaluated by Policy Studies, Inc.

The goal of CJSP was to help criminal justice policymakers and leaders in State and local jurisdictions work together more effectively in the area of corrections. A key component of the plan was gathering justice system leaders on a single team, encouraging them to communicate more, and developing their abilities to cooperate and function as a unit.

NIC funded a study to outline an approach to developing a better system. Based on those results, CEPP prepared the *Guide to a Criminal Justice System Assessment: A Work in Progress*.<sup>1</sup> This guide provides a model, with specific tasks and activities, as well as a general approach to conducting criminal justice system assessments and developing new sanctioning policies.

The 10 sites selected for the project undertook a system-wide collaborative planning effort by creating local policy teams composed of representatives from all of the criminal justice agencies in the jurisdiction (plus citizen members at some sites). The task of these teams was to implement the model and approach outlined in the *Guide*. Technical assistance was provided by representatives (site liaisons and coordinators) from NIC and CEPP.

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1. Burke, Peggy, Robert Cushman, and Becki Ney, *Guide to a Criminal Justice System Assessment: A Work in Progress*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, 1996. Available online at <http://www.nicic.org/pubs/1996/014690.pdf>.

formal recognition and authority can derail even the most well-planned effort. For example, in CJSP, one team was not sanctioned to act and, therefore, lacked the formal authority it needed to proceed on an important issue—whether to build a joint jail facility. As a result, other local committees formed and superceded the work of the team. An important decision (not to build the facility) was thus largely made without input from the CJSP policy team, which was put in place precisely to help make this type of decision.

**Lesson 2: Ensure that the collaboration team is committed to the project/process and that it has a manageable number of people on it—ideally between 8 and 15.**

Several CJSP teams had difficulty with the lack of commitment of some of their

members. It is critical that all team members understand their stake in the process and why they need to participate actively and work together with other team members. Every team member's commitment to the process should be obtained at the outset of the project. Explaining the purpose of the project, the targeted outcomes and benefits to be gained, the amount of time it will require, and the expectations of all team

*It is critical that all team members understand their stake in the process and why they need to participate actively and work together with other team members.*

## COLLABORATION VS. COORDINATION

Collaboration, as used in this study, follows the definition of the Wilder Foundation and is distinguishable from coordination:

**Collaboration** connotes a more durable and pervasive relationship than coordination. Collaborations bring separate organizations into a new structure with full commitment to a common mission. Such relationships require comprehensive planning and well-defined communication channels operating on many levels. Authority is determined by the collaborative structure. Resources are pooled or jointly secured, and projects are shared. Risk is much greater in collaboration than in coordination, because each member organization of the collaborative contributes its own resources and reputation.

**Coordination** is characterized by formal relationships and an understanding of compatible missions. Some planning and division of roles are required, and communication channels are established. Authority rests with the individual organizations, not the group, but there is some increased risk to all participants. Resources are available to participants and rewards are mutually acknowledged.

*Having a collective vision ensures that everyone on the team is striving toward the same desired future. This has proven to be extremely effective in establishing ownership for the project among members.*

members is important to securing the requisite commitment.

Several of the CJSP policy teams were larger than ideal for making policy decisions and promoting collaboration among team members. One response to this obstacle was to create a smaller executive committee or planning group from among the team members and let the committee make decisions about the project's direction and activities. What happened then, unfortunately, was that some of these decisions were not reported back to the larger group, leaving many policy team members uncertain about where CJSP was headed in their sites. A smaller policy team would have avoided this communication problem. (For more on the importance of communication, see lesson 12.)

### **Lesson 3: Team members need to create a collective vision.**

Having a collective vision ensures that everyone on the team is striving toward the same desired future. This has proven to be extremely effective in establishing ownership for the project among members.

### **Lesson 4: Teach team members how to collaborate. Help them to understand how this process differs from traditional ways of working, interacting, solving problems, and making decisions.**

Collaboration involves a different approach from the day-to-day problem solving that tends to dominate the energy of criminal justice system actors. The benefits of the collaborative approach may not be obvious to an agency faced with the pressure of daily problems that require immediate resolutions, such as whom to arrest or release from jail.

Systems thinking must be taught. It requires agencies to look beyond their own needs and consider the effects of their actions on other agencies. This will take time, especially in a system where agencies have competing roles and missions, where politics may frustrate interagency cooperation, and where power is often defined by an

agency's share of resources. Also, if a decision that affects the larger justice system can be made by a single agency, that agency may elect not to take the time to consult with other agencies to analyze the potential side effects of decisions and to seek joint decisions.

**Lesson 5: Teach and help team members to ask the right questions, collect and interpret data, and use data to drive better policymaking and decisionmaking.**

Promoting data-driven decisionmaking was an important goal of CJSP. Generally, data collection should be related to the issues that the policy team is planning to address. A generic blueprint for collecting data may be useful. This approach will help to uncover gaps in the availability of data as well as the need for automated systems that can facilitate and support data analysis.

**Lesson 6: Provide team members with some structure for completing the project/process.**

Teams need structure to function. This includes a clear purpose, a well-defined process for completing work, agreement on how decisions will be made, ground rules for working together, and definitions of member roles. The discussion of roles and responsibilities should include the team's expectations of members for attending meetings, completing selected tasks, and committing time to the work required.

**Lesson 7: Lay out, inform, and educate team members about the specific steps of the project/process at the very beginning. Increase understanding of where they are going and what they will be doing for the entire duration of the project.**

When the evaluators made their first site visits with the CJSP teams, very few team members at any of the sites seemed to understand what their site would be doing in the project. They could not articulate the overall purpose of CJSP, did not know what they would be expected to accomplish even

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in the short term, and were not familiar with the process aside from knowing that an assessment would take place at the conclusion of the project. It did not appear that any of them had seen a blueprint for the project. That is, they did not seem to know (1) the steps in and components of the process, (2) what time frames were reasonable for completing those steps, (3) how the steps would contribute to the final goals and outcomes, and (4) what roles the team would play and thus what resources it would likely need in order to fulfill them.

Teams need to have a clear picture of the whole project at the beginning. They also need to be given regular updates as to where they are in the process and what the next steps will be. Continuity from one meeting to the next, and from step to step, is key.

**Lesson 8: Identify project/process outcomes, goals, and midterm milestones early in the project or process.**

CJSP did not identify site-specific project or process outcomes or goals early in the project. Most teams had not yet done so even 2 years into the project. Midterm milestones or interim goals also were not established early on. As a result, the policy teams had

*Defining goals, outcomes, and midterm milestones helps to focus teams.*

*Acknowledging and celebrating milestones help to build and maintain momentum in a project.*

no criteria on which to judge how well they were doing and no accomplishments to celebrate or publicize to those concerned.

Defining goals, outcomes, and midterm milestones helps to focus teams. Acknowledging and celebrating milestones help to build and maintain momentum in a project.

**Lesson 9: Help policy teams identify and define their long-term priority/strategic issues (rather than their immediate problems) early on.**

Strategic issues may be internal or external to the organization and often underlie or encompass what appear to be numerous unrelated or loosely related short-term problems. They focus on general directions rather than specific operations. As with a vision, identifying strategic issues early in the assessment process is important so that the policy team can begin thinking in the long term rather than just focusing on the most immediate problems occupying people's attention.

**Lesson 10: Ensure that leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that policy team meetings and the overall process are facilitated effectively.**

It is essential that the person or persons assuming leadership for the team have a clear picture of what they are to accomplish and how they intend to do it. Without that picture, important tasks may not get done, goals and outcomes may not be achieved, momentum will be difficult to build, interest and enthusiasm for the project may wane, people may not feel a sense of accomplish-

ment, viewpoints may get lost, and some team members may become alienated and withdraw from active participation.

The role of facilitator is often overlooked or undervalued. Some of the CJSP site coordinators and/or other members of the consultant team provided facilitation when they were onsite, but they were limited in the number of site visits they could make. In their absence, the policy team chairs usually facilitated the meetings, with varying degrees of success. Because the project could not provide outside facilitation assistance at each meeting, the policy team chairs would have benefited from some facilitation training. Alternatively, the important role of facilitator could possibly be filled by drawing upon other local resources in the community, such as other departmental agencies, colleges, or businesses that have and would be willing to loan skilled facilitators.

**Lesson 11: Ensure that policy teams have the staff support and resources needed to coordinate project/process activities.**

Lack of adequate staff support was an important theme raised in the evaluation surveys. Staff support is critical for arranging meeting logistics, producing useful minutes of team meetings, obtaining information and other resources for the team when necessary, arranging meeting schedules, and other tasks. The ideal staff person should be knowledgeable about the issues and be able to help create meeting agendas and prepare drafts of written products.

Few sites had adequate staff support at the start of the project. One reason may have been that sites did not understand or fully appreciate how much time was needed to complete project tasks. One site liaison mentioned that if she had known the time commitment required at the beginning of the project, she would have tried to arrange for more support. Based on their initial experiences, sites began to commit more resources to staffing for the remainder of CJSP.



**Lesson 12: Communicate continuously the next steps and activities in the process and the rationale for doing them. Tie the work that is being done to the appropriate steps in the process and ultimately to the project/process outcomes.**

Team members need to know and be able to explain the process, the activities, and why things are being done. They also need to be kept informed about their progress on a routine basis and to have work assignments between meetings.

Communicating progress in achieving goals and celebrating completion of project assignments help keep teams focused, encourage them to continue in their efforts, and allow teams to see progress in meeting their longer term goals and objectives. Communication and celebration keep members motivated and engaged in the process.

### **Learning From Experience**

CJSP shows the value of a collaborative approach and of system-wide, strategic thinking in developing criminal justice system policy. The lessons learned through this project will be helpful to criminal justice professionals who are starting up, or are engaged in, other joint efforts at criminal justice problemsolving when the players in the project are ready to commit the time and resources necessary for true collaboration.

NCJ 204517

*Communicating progress in achieving goals and celebrating completion of project assignments help keep teams focused, encourage them to continue in their efforts, and allow teams to see progress in meeting their longer term goals and objectives. Communication and celebration keep members motivated and engaged in the process.*

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#### **For More Information**

- Contact Policy Studies, Inc., 999 18th Street, Suite 900, Denver CO 80202.
- A summary of the final report on this evaluation is available online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/189570.pdf>.



# The Campbell Collaboration: Helping To Understand “What Works”

*by Anthony Petrosino, David P. Farrington, and Lawrence W. Sherman*

## About the Authors

Anthony Petrosino, a research consultant based in New England, currently coordinates the Campbell Crime & Justice Group. David P. Farrington is a professor at Cambridge University’s Institute of Criminology. Lawrence W. Sherman is director of the Jerry Lee Center of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania.

Suppose you want to know whether boot camps reduce recidivism or whether early childhood prevention programs really help prevent future criminal behaviors. In the past, those interested in criminal justice interventions such as these had to collect countless studies from a variety of sources in order to answer these questions. Now there’s another option.

The Campbell Collaboration (C2) was launched in 2000 with the goal of offering systematic research reviews to researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and the general public.<sup>1</sup> C2, named in honor of the psychologist Donald T. Campbell, is an international organization centered on scholars who are

reviewing three areas of research: education, social welfare, and crime and justice.

The Campbell Crime and Justice Group (CCJG) has developed a computer-based library that will—in due course—contain more than 35 research reviews. These reviews are meant to help decisionmakers and others better understand the research conducted on these selected topics and help them make more informed decisions concerning the use of criminal justice interventions. (See “Research Reviews—What Are They?”)

## The Story Behind C2

The founders of C2 were not the first to develop an electronic library of systematic research reviews, but they were the first to adopt the idea for use in fields other than health and medicine.

The inspiration for C2 was the Cochrane Collaboration, formed in 1993. This group thought that new computer tools could be

## RESEARCH REVIEWS—WHAT ARE THEY?

Research reviews have been used in the criminology and criminal justice fields for decades, as decisionmakers asked researchers for help in making sense of large, fragmented, and sometimes conflicting knowledge bases. Research reviews take a broad look at multiple studies conducted in a given area, in an effort to identify “what works.”

Over the past 30 years, scholars have refined the methods of research reviews. These changes include an increase in the explicitness and detail that reviewers provide about their work, answering such questions as why certain studies were included, what search methods were used, how they were appraised, and what were the criteria for success of an intervention.<sup>1</sup>

1. See Petrosino, Anthony, Robert Boruch, Haluk Soydan, Lorna Duggan, and Julio Sanchez-Meca, “Meeting the Challenges of Evidence-Based Policy: The Campbell Collaboration,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (November 2001); or Farrington, David, and Anthony Petrosino, “Systematic Reviews of Criminological Interventions: The Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Group,” *International Annals of Criminology* 37(1/2) (2000).

used to improve the research review process in the health care arena. The result was an unparalleled electronic library of approximately 1,200 completed reviews.

Designed to prepare, maintain, and disseminate systematic reviews of research on the effects of health care interventions, the Cochrane Library is available on the World Wide Web or on CD-ROM.<sup>2</sup> The electronic nature of the Library allows the reviews to be maintained, updated, and disseminated more easily than in the more established print journals.

The success of the Cochrane Collaboration and its Library helped propel the popularity of evidence-based medicine and eventually led to discussions on how a similar infrastructure could be launched to facilitate evidence-based social policy. Professor Robert Boruch of the University of Pennsylvania and others discussed whether such an organization was necessary and sustainable, and meetings in England, Sweden, the United States, and elsewhere confirmed the international interest and eagerness of many to participate.<sup>3</sup>

It was from these discussions that C2 and CCJG were born.

## The CCJG

The CCJG coordinating group, which helps develop C2 guidelines, is responsible for choosing topics for the criminal justice systematic reviews, identifying individuals who could contribute to the projects, recognizing who would benefit from the work, offering advice to reviewers on how to proceed with the projects, and disseminating the information once the systematic reviews are complete.

*The Campbell Crime and Justice Group has developed a computer-based library that will—in due course—contain more than 35 research reviews. These reviews are meant to help decision-makers and others better understand the research conducted on these selected topics and help them make more informed decisions concerning the use of criminal justice interventions.*

During its first 2 years, CCJG chose 25 topics for systematic reviews. The group has generally been proactive in selecting topics and in soliciting experienced reviewers who increase the visibility and credibility of the work. In 2002, CCJG began fielding unsolicited proposals.

Despite the rigorous and demanding nature of the assignment, the response from the academic community has been positive—all 38 titles in CCJG’s portfolio (see figure 1) have a lead author who has committed to heading the review team. Although a single person is invited to take the lead on the review, collaboration (including multidisciplinary and multinational authorship) is encouraged. Working as part of a team not only distributes the workload, it also provides partners who can help to ensure that review decisions are consistent throughout the project.

To date, the reviews have focused on policies, programs, and practices that reduce crime and delinquency. CCJG’s scope is broader, however, and plans are underway to initiate systematic reviews focusing on forensics, court and prison management, and police misconduct.

### The Steering Committee

A 17-member steering committee representing 13 nations guides the early development of CCJG and continues to set its agenda, identifying tasks that should be undertaken to advance the Group’s work and acting as the ultimate editorial board for CCJG products. International representation is considered important not only for identifying potential collaborators and evaluation studies from nations outside of the United States (particularly studies written in languages other than English), but also for identifying potential dissemination outlets for Campbell reviews. Many steering committee members have strong connections to the policy and practice community, allowing them to understand the needs of the field and pinpoint what questions are the hot topics of the time.

The Jerry Lee Center of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania serves as the institutional base for CCJG.

### The CCJG Database

C2-RIPE, the Campbell Collaboration Reviews of Interventions and Policy

**Figure 1: CCJG Portfolio of Review Titles**

Boot Camps	Interventions for the Forensic Mental Health Population	Prison-Based Drug Treatment
Child Skills Training	Interventions for Serious, Persistent Juvenile Offenders	Problem-Oriented Policing
Closed-Circuit Television	Juvenile Aftercare Programs	Programs to Prevent Repeat Victimization
Cognitive-Behavioral Programs	Juvenile Curfews	Programs for Victims of Nonfamilial Violence
Community-Based Alternatives to Incarceration (Adults)	Length of Prison Sentence	Restorative Justice Programs
Community-Based Programs for Juveniles	Mentoring Programs	Scared Straight and Other Juvenile Awareness Programs
Corporate Crime Deterrence Strategies	Neighborhood Watch	Screening Instruments for Risk of Suicide of Youths During Juvenile Lockup
Cost-Benefits of Sentencing	Nonpharmacological Treatment for Personality Disorders	Screening Instruments for Risk of Violence in the Forensic Mental Health Population
Drug Courts	Offender Reentry to Work Programs	Sex Offender Treatment
Early Childhood Prevention	Outpatient Treatment for Drug-Involved Offenders	Situational Factors for Preventing Institutional Violence
Electronic Monitoring	Police Strategies to Reduce Illegal Gun Carrying	Street Lighting
Faith-Based Programs	Prevention of Crime Aboard/Against Commercial Aircraft	
Family-Based Programs		
Hotspots Policing		
Interventions for Domestic Violence		

Evaluations, was designed to become a central archive and resource for all the C2 systematic reviews, with the hope that ultimately it will be viewed as an important resource for criminal justice policymakers, practitioners, researchers, journalists, and the general public.

Because the archive will only be available electronically, C2-RIPE can be updated easily and disseminated more quickly than print journals or reports. C2-RIPE is a “living” or perpetual database, because reviewers are required to substantively update their work within 24 months. The updating process allows the reviewers to incorporate any relevant studies reported since the last publication of the review, employ different analyses to respond to criticisms, and take into account any new methodological developments that the steering committee agrees are necessary. This is important, given the provisional and dynamic nature of evidence, and it also will dissuade the usual “one-off” nature of many reviews, which are not updated when funding or interest wanes.

## Funding

CCJG has aggressively sought external funding. Four organizations now support the work of the Group: NIJ, the Canadian Department of Justice, the UK Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate, and the Smith-Richardson Foundation. Contacts with other funding agencies have been promising, and the Australian Institute of Criminology generously hosts and updates the CCJG Web site.

## Goals

The goal of the Campbell Collaboration and C2-RIPE is to become an important resource for evidence-based policy by providing an accessible archive containing hundreds—if not thousands—of high-quality reviews. But C2 does not wish to oversell the role of evidence in policy decisions. Because good evidence cannot always resolve the political and administrative dilemmas faced by many decisionmakers, Campbell reviews will inform decisionmakers by explicitly revealing what is known and not known based on the scientific evidence.

## Acknowledgment

This article is a condensed version of a previously published paper by the authors entitled “The Campbell Crime and Justice Group: Early Development and Progress,” *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 38(1): 5–18. Work on this paper was primarily supported by a grant from the Smith-Richardson Foundation to the Jerry Lee Center of Criminology and the Home Office to the Institute of Criminology at Cambridge University.

Criminologists have often considered criminology a noble profession because it aims to reduce the misery stemming from crime and injustice. To the extent that the Campbell Collaboration can fulfill Don Campbell’s vision of helping people to make well-informed decisions, it will help criminologists stay true to criminology’s noble intent.

NCJ 204518

## For More Information

- For more information about CCJG and its projects, visit its Web site at <http://www.aic.gov.au/campbellcj>.
- Contact Anthony Petrosino, Coordinator, 54 Middlesex Turnpike, Building B, Bedford, MA 01730, 781-276-4670, [anthony\\_petrosino@harvard.edu](mailto:anthony_petrosino@harvard.edu).

## Notes

1. More information about the Campbell Collaboration can be found in Petrosino, Anthony, Robert Boruch, Haluk Soydan, Lorna Duggan, and Julio Sanchez-Meca, “Meeting the Challenges of Evidence-Based Policy: The Campbell Collaboration,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (November 2001); or at its Web site, <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>.
2. Visit the Cochrane Library at <http://www.cochrane.org> for more information.
3. For example, see Davies, Philip, Anthony Petrosino, and Iain Chalmers, eds., *Proceedings of the International Meeting on Systematic Reviews of the Effects of Social and Educational Interventions, July 15–16*, London: School of Public Policy, University College–London, 1999.



## The Data Resources Program: Making Data Available to Researchers

**N**IJ funds numerous research and evaluation projects every year, and since 1984 much of the resulting data have been available to criminal justice researchers and evaluators. In an effort to help researchers and evaluators replicate original findings or test new hypotheses, NIJ created the Data Resources Program (DRP), which offers most of the data free of charge.

DRP helps researchers to obtain and use the data for secondary analysis, provides training in methodological and statistical issues relevant to major NIJ studies, and offers technical assistance.

The data from many concluded NIJ research grants are included in the DRP database along with documentation files, codebooks (which outline the data files' structure, content, and layout), and the data definition syntax files for SAS and SPSS (two statistical software packages commonly used in the social sciences field).

In addition to the database, DRP also prepares and distributes CD-ROM's containing topical studies. For example, the Program has released *Crime Victimization Data, 1973–1991* (ICPSR 6261), *Data on Crime and Community* (ICPSR 2434), and *Violence Research Data, 2nd Edition* (ICPSR 6728). DRP also helps NIJ staff prepare data sets, including those related to crime mapping and spatial analysis programs.

Since 1993, DRP has conducted an annual workshop in conjunction with the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) Summer Program for quantitative analysis of criminal justice data. Twenty individuals are selected to participate in the workshop, which focuses on a different crime and justice topic each year.

In 1992, NIJ transferred the activities of the program to ICPSR's National Archive of Criminal Justice Data Team at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.

## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF DRP



With more than 440 research and evaluation projects from NIJ and more than 600 criminal justice data collections from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics and other criminal justice agencies listed in the DRP database, you can probably find the criminal justice statistics you need. But what steps do you take to locate the data? Below are some tips that may help.

The first step is to conduct a general search of the database using the Web site's "Access Data" page at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/archive.html>. The search feature allows you to search by keyword, title of data collection, study number, or principal investigator's name. The data are also divided into 12 divisions—attitude surveys; community studies; computer programs and instructional packages; corrections; court case processing; courts; crime and delinquency; criminal justice system; drugs, alcohol, and crime; official statistics; police; and victimization—so you can browse the files by general topic.

Once the data are located, you simply have to download the ASCII files. Most of the files are available free of charge, but some are available on CD-ROM for a small fee, and other data sets are available only to Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) members. Some studies, however, contain information that could be used to indirectly identify study participants; these are available only through a restricted access archive if you contact ICPSR and submit additional certifications.

Finally, if you cannot locate the needed statistics or are having trouble using the database, DRP staff can help you. They offer assistance with finding data appropriate to a specific topic, downloading files from a study, and minor syntax editing necessary to recreate the data files on your computer. Email [nacjd@icpsr.umich.edu](mailto:nacjd@icpsr.umich.edu) or call toll-free 1-800-999-0960 for further help.

### For More Information

- Visit DRP's National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) Web site at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD> for more information or access to the resource database. For more general information about the Program, contact Chris Dunn, DRP Principal Investigator, at [nacjd@icpsr.umich.edu](mailto:nacjd@icpsr.umich.edu).
- To download a copy of 2002's *Data Collections Available From the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data*, a catalog of NIJ-funded studies archived at NACJD, visit <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ORG/Publications/NACJD/nacjd02.pdf>.
- For a list of DRP CD-ROM's, visit [http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/disk\\_cd.html](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/disk_cd.html).
- For more information about the summer workshop or to apply for admission, contact Chris Dunn at [nacjd@icpsr.umich.edu](mailto:nacjd@icpsr.umich.edu) or visit <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/TRAINING/summer/index.html>.

*The Data Resources Program helps researchers to obtain and use the data for secondary analysis, provides training in methodological and statistical issues relevant to major NIJ studies, and offers technical assistance.*



## At-A-Glance: Recent Research Findings

### HOW TO GET AT-A-GLANCE MATERIALS

Materials are available at:

- NIJ's Web site at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij>, or
- NCJRS, [puborder@ncjrs.org](mailto:puborder@ncjrs.org), 1-800-851-3420, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000.

The summaries in this section are based on the following:

**RESEARCH IN PROGRESS SEMINARS.** At these seminars, scholars discuss their ongoing research and preliminary findings with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals. Sixty-minute VHS videotapes of the Research in Progress seminars are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) at 1-800-851-3420. Videotaped seminars are \$19 (\$24 in Canada and other countries).

**NIJ FINAL REPORTS.** These final submissions from NIJ grantees typically are available from NCJRS through interlibrary loan. In some cases, photocopies may be obtained for a fee. For information about these reports and possible fees, contact NCJRS.

**NIJ PUBLICATIONS.** Some of the information here is summarized from recent NIJ publications, which are available from the NIJ Web site or by contacting NCJRS. Refer to the documents' accession (ACN) or NCJ numbers.



## Child Custody Mediation and Domestic Violence

*NIJ Research in Progress Seminar, "Child Custody Mediation's Failure to Protect: Why Should the Criminal Justice System Care?"* Dennis P. Saccuzzo and Nancy E. Johnson, grant number 99-WT-VX-0015, available on videotape from NCJRS (NCJ 196113).

California researchers interested in mandatory child custody mediation were surprised when attorneys who represented mothers at these proceedings said that they often advised their clients not to tell the mediator about domestic abuse. After looking at the results of such mediations, the researchers determined that the attorneys' advice may well be justified—women who informed custody mediators that they were victims of domestic violence (DV) often received less favorable custody awards.

### Custody Mediation

Used in nearly all States, child custody mediation is intended to save court resources, time, and money. Although mediation is generally thought of as a consensual, voluntary process, child custody mediation is mandatory in many States, including California. Custody mediation also differs from the usual mediation model in that the mediator often makes a recommendation to the court if the parties cannot reach an agreement.

The researchers looked at mediations in which the parties could not reach a mutual agreement. They compared 200 mediations involving charges of DV with 200 non-DV mediations. The DV group was identified based on answers to a pre-mediation screening form, the existence of a restraining order in the case file, and/or comments in the mediator's report.

The researchers asked two primary questions:

1. How well do mediators recognize and acknowledge domestic violence?
2. What are the outcomes of mediation, and what drives these outcomes?

*Attorneys who represented mothers at these proceedings said that they often advised their clients not to tell the mediator about domestic abuse. After looking at the results of such mediations, the researchers determined that the attorneys' advice may well be justified; women who informed custody mediators that they were victims of domestic violence often received less favorable custody awards.*

### Recognizing Domestic Violence

When domestic violence was expressly alleged on the pre-screening form, mediators directly addressed the issue less than half the time. This was true even when there was also a restraining order noted in the file. Other indications of violence increased the likelihood that the mediator would acknowledge domestic violence as an issue. Yet, the factor that most often correlated with the mediator's acknowledgment of domestic violence allegations was not associated allegations of child abuse or neglect, but rather allegations of property damage. Police involvement of any kind increased the likelihood that the mediator would include allegations of domestic violence in the final report to the court.

### Effect of DV Allegations on Custody Awards

Did it matter whether the mediator took note of abuse? In terms of awarding legal custody (the right to make decisions on behalf of the children), the answer was no. Joint legal custody awards were the norm in both the DV and non-DV groups. (Joint legal custody was awarded about 90 percent of the time.)

As for primary physical custody (defined in this study as having possession of the children more than 75 percent of the time), allegations of DV did make a difference—but not the difference that might be expected. Only 35 percent of the mothers who alleged domestic abuse got primary custody, compared to 42 percent in the non-DV group. Fathers who were accused of DV were given primary custody in 10 percent of cases; non-DV fathers got primary custody 9 percent of the time.

Domestic violence allegations affected not only the actual percentage of physical custody awarded, but also seemed to influence the mediators' perceptions of the amount of physical custody they were awarding. In non-DV cases, the mediators slightly overestimated awards of primary custody to the mother. They stated in 48 percent of their final reports to the court that primary custody should be given to the mother; yet when the number of hours awarded to the mother were counted up, primary custody for the mother was actually awarded in only 42 percent of cases. This discrepancy was much more pronounced in the DV group. In almost half of the DV cases (49 percent), the mediator's report summation informed the court that primary physical custody was recommended for the mother. By counting the number of hours awarded in the detailed parenting plan, however, the researchers determined that DV mothers actually got primary custody only 35 percent of the time.

The mediators also misperceived the extent to which they awarded physical custody to accused batterers. In about 60 percent of the DV cases, the mediators *said* that they were recommending that the children spend 20 percent or less of their time with their father. The specifics of the parenting plans did not reflect these recommendations. Indeed, in over 70 percent of the DV cases, the children were actually in the care of the father more than 20 percent of the time.

The reasons for the disconnect between the mediators' reports to the court and the actual award plans are still unclear. But given that judges almost always follow the recommendation of the mediator and may not calculate the actual award percentages

under the detailed parenting plan themselves, the misperception can lead to custody awards that are not what the mediator or the judge intended. And because the mediators in the study were three times as likely to say one thing in the report and do another in the plan when working on DV cases, battered mothers who withhold allegations of abuse might have a better chance of getting the parenting plan the mediator thinks they deserve.

### **Supervised Visitation and Protected Child Exchanges**

Alleging domestic abuse also appeared to negatively affect the chances of receiving the kinds of protections such as supervised visitations with the alleged battering spouse and protected child exchanges (ordering transfers of the children at a police station or other public place).

For example, although supervised visitation was recommended in more DV cases than non-DV cases (22 percent vs. 16 percent), when police intervention in family disputes was noted by the mediator in non-DV cases, the mediators were twice as likely to recommend supervised visitation than in DV cases in which the police had been called. The researchers theorize that where the mother has not alleged violence in the home despite the clear intervention of law enforcement, the mediators might have a stronger sense that it was up to them to take action to protect the children.

Similarly, where the mediators noted evidence that threats had been made by the father but the mother alleged no DV, protected child exchanges were recommended twice as often. Those who were forthright with their DV allegations thus secured less protection for themselves and their children.

### **Is Domestic Violence a Distraction in Making Custody Decisions?**

Decision theory states that people rely on just a few factors when making decisions, even when they are presented with a great deal of information. It is possible, then,

that domestic violence allegations may only serve to obscure the importance of other factors (such as police intervention or spousal threats) presented to the mediators. The researchers also found that some factors, such as parental drug use, might overshadow any allegations of domestic violence.

The researchers continue to study how custody mediators recognize, acknowledge, and deal with domestic violence allegations. They are also looking at how well child

custody mediation addresses other factors that may be relevant to child custody decisions.

#### For more information

- Contact Dennis P. Saccuzzo (dsaccuzz@sciences.sdsu.edu) and Nancy E. Johnson (njohnson@sciences.sdsu.edu), San Diego State University and Applications of Psychology to Law, 2341 Jefferson Street, Suite 101, San Diego, CA 92110–3009, 619–299–8525.

## Another Look at the Effects of Child Abuse

*Final report submitted to NIJ, Childhood Victimization and Delinquency, Adult Criminality, and Violent Criminal Behavior: A Replication and Extension, Diana J. English, Cathy Spatz Widom, and Carol Brandford, grant number 97–IJ–CX–0017, available from NCJRS (NCJ 192291).*

Violence against children and violent crime are two serious social problems that were linked in early research on the “cycle of violence” by Cathy Spatz Widom and others. (See “Child Abuse and Later Effects,” *NIJ Journal*, January 2000.) Diana J. English, Carol Brandford, and Widom used the earlier research as a jumping-off point to conduct a second study on the relationship between child abuse and neglect and delinquency, criminality, and violent behavior. The second study confirmed and expanded on the concept of a cycle of violence.

### Other Times and Places

This study built on the earlier research by examining a different time period (the 1980’s rather than the late 1960’s and early 1970’s) and a different part of the country (the Northwest instead of the Midwest). This study also included an additional ethnic population (Native American youth). In addition, the researchers focused more on gender and ethnic differences. Finally, this study explored the potential effect on children when social service agencies place them outside the care of their immediate families. The researchers defined abuse or neglect in

the study as the injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child by any caregiver under circumstances that indicated the child’s health, welfare, or safety was harmed.

### Effects of Childhood Maltreatment Confirmed

The report replicates earlier findings that the effects of childhood victimization last into adulthood. Children who are physically abused and neglected have an increased risk of arrest for violence. The second study added a new finding regarding emotional maltreatment. The researchers found that victims of emotional abuse also manifest an increased risk for violent crime.

As a whole, the abused and neglected children were 11 times more likely to be arrested for a violent crime as a juvenile, 2.7 times more likely to be arrested for a violent crime as an adult, and 3.1 times more likely to be arrested for any violent crime (juvenile or adult) compared to the matched control group. Victims of sexual abuse were the least likely to be arrested for a violent crime—a finding similar to earlier published results.

### Differences by Race/Ethnicity

The current study extended the existing knowledge base by adding Native American children to a population sample of abused and neglected Caucasian and African American youth. As found earlier, both

*The report replicates earlier findings that the effects of childhood victimization last into adulthood. Children who are physically abused and neglected have an increased risk of arrest for violence.*

the Caucasian and the African American youths showed a significant increase in the likelihood of an arrest for violent crimes as juveniles if they were abused or neglected. The Caucasian youth in this study were 20 times more likely to have a juvenile arrest for a violent crime than the Caucasian youth in the matched control group. In contrast, a juvenile in the Native American abused and neglected group was not significantly more likely to be arrested for violent crime than a Native American juvenile in the control group. The same pattern emerged with regard to the risk for being arrested as an adult and for any violent arrests. However, it should be noted that there was a high percentage of arrests for Native Americans in both groups. Also, the number of Native American youths added to the study was small, making it difficult to detect the effects of childhood abuse or neglect.

### Differences by Gender

The researchers found an increased risk associated with child maltreatment for both males and females, echoing the earlier work. Abused and neglected males were five times more likely than the control group males to be arrested as juveniles and almost twice as likely to be arrested as adults.

Even though girls and women typically have low rates of engaging in officially recorded criminal behavior, experiencing child abuse or neglect was still found to have a substantial impact on the criminal behavior of females. Abused and neglected females were nearly four times more likely to be arrested as a juvenile and twice as likely to be arrested as an adult. These findings suggest that female victims of child abuse and neglect, long thought to direct their pain and suffering inward, may also release it externally through negative behavior, just like their male counterparts.

### Placement Decisions

The study found a relationship between removing a child from parental care and later delinquent and criminal behavior. It also showed that children who were removed from the custody of a parent or

primary caregiver and placed in foster care with nonrelatives were significantly more likely to be arrested—as juveniles, as adults, for a violent crime, and for any crime. Moreover, children who were initially left with a primary caregiver when the abuse or neglect was identified, and who were subsequently moved to foster care, showed even greater levels of arrest in all forms than victimized children who were moved right away or who remained with their primary caregiver until the age of 18. This finding suggests that further research is needed to understand the characteristics of families and children removed from parental custody; to determine what types of behavior lead to the removal of a child; and to discover which factors influence whether a child is placed in foster care, placed with relatives, or left with the primary caregiver.

### Practical Implications

From a prevention perspective, these findings argue for improved assessments and early intervention for children who are victims of abuse and neglect. Resources applied to properly assessing and responding to abuse and neglect situations can prevent later negative consequences for these children and for others. This finding applies to children who remain with their primary caregivers as well as to those who are moved to the care of others.

The researchers suggest a need to pay more attention to the different types of child maltreatment, to the effects of abuse and neglect on children's growth and development, to the services provided to these children, and to the consequences to children and society if these issues are not addressed.

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#### For more information

- Contact Diana J. English at Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, Office of Children's Administration Research, 4045 Delridge Way S.W., Suite 400, Seattle, WA 98106-1274, 206-933-3535, [endi300@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:endi300@dshs.wa.gov).

## Why Do Hung Juries Hang?

*Final report submitted to NIJ, Are Hung Juries a Problem?, Paula Hannaford-Agor, Valerie P. Hans, Nicole L. Mott, and G. Thomas Munsterman, grant number 98-IJ-CX-0048, available online at [http://www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Res\\_Juries\\_HungJuriesProblemPub.pdf](http://www.ncsconline.org/WC/Publications/Res_Juries_HungJuriesProblemPub.pdf).*

A criminal trial can be very expensive. It is even more costly when it has to be redone—and that's just the monetary cost. Retrials also take an emotional toll on victims and witnesses.

With these facts in mind, the National Center for State Courts examined deadlocked, or “hung,” juries to see what characteristics they share and how they might be avoided. As one part of the study, surveys of jurors, judges, and attorneys were conducted in four jurisdictions. The Central Division, Criminal, of the Los Angeles County (California) Superior Court and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia were selected because of reported concerns about hung jury rates in those jurisdictions. The Maricopa County (Arizona) Superior Court was chosen because of an innovative procedure there that permits judges to allow further evidence and arguments when a jury reports it is deadlocked. The Bronx County (New York) Supreme Court was included because, like the other sites, it had a high volume of felony jury trials (allowing for quick collection of data) and had court personnel willing to cooperate in the study. A total of 382 cases were included in the analysis.

A second part of the study took a closer look at 46 of the cases, trying to determine the primary and peripheral causes of deadlock. This subgroup, while too small to provide statistically significant numbers, nonetheless offers some interesting insight into the factors leading to a hung jury.

### What Is a Hung Jury?

The definition of a “hung jury” varies, and this led to differences in the reporting of hung juries across jurisdictions. Some

counted a jury as “hung” if it failed to reach a verdict on any charge or on any defendant. Some only counted a hung jury if the jury failed to reach a verdict on all counts or on all defendants.

To control for these disparate definitions, the research team's analysis included several categories of jury deadlock. Juries that hung on all counts occurred least frequently (8 percent of cases studied). Juries hung on the first count of the indictment (generally the most serious charge) in 10 percent of cases and on at least one count charged in 13 percent of cases. The number of defendants tried was related to the likelihood of the jury deadlocking. In 12 percent of single-defendant cases, the jury hung on at least one count, but that figure increased to 27 percent when multiple defendants were tried.

### Effect of Multiple Counts

As predicted by the researchers, the number of counts affected the likelihood of a hung jury. As the number of counts increases, so does the opportunity for disagreement. So, the more counts, the more likely that a jury will hang on at least one of them. On the other hand, more counts also means more opportunity for jurors to agree. Accordingly, juries that hang on all charges generally had fewer counts to consider.

The type of crime charged also made a difference in the jurisdictions studied. Drug cases constituted 28 percent of the total sample, but only 12 percent of the hung juries. In contrast, juries in murder cases were more likely than was expected to hang on at least some counts given their proportion of the total caseload—13 percent of the sample, but 24 percent of the hung juries.

### Effect of Complex Evidence

Cases with complex evidence or complex legal instructions may make it more difficult for jurors to reach agreement. When asked to rate how easy the trial was for them

*Quantity of evidence and length of trial did not appear to affect the likelihood of a hung jury. However, the quality of the evidence was a very important factor.*

**Figure 1: Primary Reasons for Hung Jury, by Site**

Reason	Site			
	Los Angeles	Maricopa	Bronx	Washington, DC
Weak Case	12	5	—	10
Police Credibility	2	—	2	3
Juror Concerns About Fairness	1	1	—	5
Case Complexity	—	—	—	2
Dysfunctional Deliberation Process	—	—	—	—
Unknown	—	1	1	1
<b>Total Number of Cases</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>46*</b>			

\*These in-depth case studies were a subsample of the 382 cases studied.

and their fellow jurors to understand, members of hung juries were more likely to describe the trial as complex and difficult. Interestingly, judges and attorneys did not share the jurors’ perceptions; they rated the complexity of the evidence and law as comparable in hung and verdict cases.

Case complexity rarely appeared as the primary cause of jury deadlock in the second part of the study. However, it did play a peripheral role for some of the hung juries.

### Effect of Quality of the Evidence

Quantity of evidence and length of trial did not appear to affect the likelihood of a hung jury. However, the quality of the evidence was a very important factor. By far, the most frequently perceived primary cause of hung juries in the second part of the study was weak evidence (see figure 1). When asked to rate the strength of the prosecution’s case, members of hung juries displayed much more disagreement in their ratings than did members of verdict juries. Another effect was seen when jurors were asked to rate the ambiguity of the evidence. When a jury’s average rating of evidence “closeness” was high (that is, the jurors did not view the evidence as clearly in favor of the prosecution or the defense), that jury was significantly more likely to have been

unable to reach a verdict on at least one charge (see figure 2, page 27).

### Sentiments About Fairness of the Law

Another factor leading to hung juries was the degree to which jurors believed that the law they were instructed to apply was fair and would lead to the legally correct outcome. The concern seemed to be not one of sympathy for the individual defendant, but rather dissatisfaction with the fairness of the law in principle or its application in that particular trial.

### Effect of the Deliberation Process

Several aspects of the jury deliberation process appeared to affect the final trial result in the jurisdictions studied. These included:

- Members of hung juries reported taking their first vote earlier than the members of verdict juries—on average, within the first 10 minutes of deliberation.
- Where jurors ultimately could not reach a verdict, there was less likely to be a large majority in the first vote favoring either conviction or acquittal.
- Compared to verdict jurors, members of hung juries were more likely to categorize fellow jurors as “unreasonable people” and were more likely to feel that one or more jurors “dominated” the deliberations.

The deliberation process was never reported as a primary reason for a hung jury, but it did contribute to jury deadlock at a secondary level in over one-fourth of the trials.

### Presumptions Proven Wrong

A number of presumptions about the causes of hung juries have been expressed in recent years. Many observers have asserted that the primary cause of jury deadlock is individual jurors holding out for illegitimate reasons. Some also view the problem as racial or ethnic bias or conflict. Others

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECREASING THE NUMBER OF HUNG JURIES

What can policymakers do in jurisdictions with unacceptably high hung jury rates? One popular proposal is to eliminate the requirement of a unanimous verdict in felony trials, adopting a supermajority rule (for example, 11–1 or 10–2) instead. There is no question that this approach would substantially reduce the number of hung juries in most jurisdictions. Proponents of this approach point out that it eliminates the “veto power” of individual jurors who unreasonably or illegitimately seek to thwart a consensus.

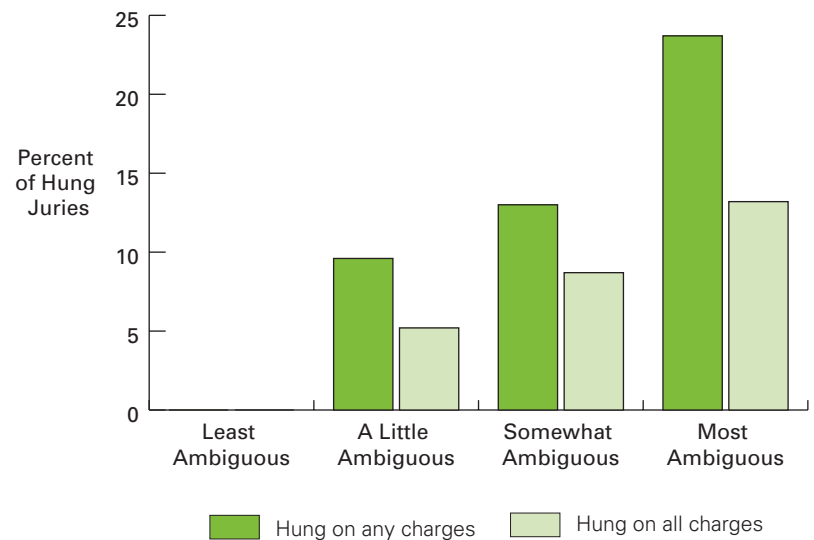
But such an approach may address the symptoms of disagreement among jurors without addressing the causes. Moreover, a nonunanimous verdict rule might affect a jury’s deliberations in unintended ways, such as cutting off minority viewpoints before jurors have had an opportunity to consider them thoughtfully.

Other solutions, based on other theories of juror deadlock, may prove to be more effective. Some approaches being tried are:

- Better preparation of evidence by prosecutors and defense attorneys.
- Better tools to help jurors understand the evidence and the law, such as permitting jurors to take notes, allowing jurors to question witnesses, and providing written copies of instructions.
- Better guidance for jurors on how to engage in productive deliberations.

see jury nullification—the refusal of some jurors to base their verdict on the evidence and the law—as the main cause. A variety of proposals based on these presumptions have been offered to deal with the problem of hung juries. (See “Recommendations for Decreasing the Number of Hung Juries.”)

**Figure 2: Percent of Juries That Hang, by Ambiguity of Evidence**



However, prior to this research project, only a handful of studies gave more than superficial consideration to the dynamics of hung juries. On this slim basis, it was difficult for policymakers to reach informed judgments about the probable effect of various reform proposals.

This research—which combined a limited survey of hung jury rates, a jurisdictional study of felony jury trials, and case studies of the 46 hung juries documented in the sample—provides a clearer picture of the reasons for hung juries and should help those who are searching for ways to decrease the number of cases requiring retrial because of jury deadlock.

### For more information

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Although it may be best to let police lead the way, housing authority employees and social service providers can provide valuable assistance in the process of identifying public housing crime problems and taking the necessary actions to solve them.

## Problem-Oriented Policing Succeeds in Public Housing

*Journal article, "Problem-Oriented Policing in Public Housing: The Jersey City Evaluation," Lorraine Green Mazerolle, Justin Ready, William Terrill, and Elin Waring, Justice Quarterly 17(1) (March 2000): 129–158, published by the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. Research supported by NIJ grant number 94-IJ-CX-0063 (NCJ 182051).*

Public housing developments have a reputation as high crime areas, and numerous studies have proven this reputation to be well deserved. Rates of violent crime are generally higher in public housing sites than at other inner-city locations.<sup>1</sup> One study in New Jersey suggested a way to combat serious crime in public housing using problem-oriented policing. This approach seeks to combine the resources of police, housing authorities, and social service agencies in identifying specific problems at each location and taking targeted action to address those problems. The study shows that this approach can be effective, as long as the team maintains a high level of activity that is led by its law enforcement members.

### Starting the Program

Six public housing sites in Jersey City, New Jersey, participated in the study. A problem-oriented policing team was assembled at each site, and a police lieutenant headed each team. Other team members were a site-based police officer from the police department's public housing unit, two community service officers, a civilian site manager, a social service liaison officer, and one or more tenant representatives.

The teams began the 1-year study by identifying the problem areas specific to their location. Most of the teams identified similar types of areas, including entrances, walkways, playgrounds, parking lots, and individual apartments, although each team's list was unique to its housing project. The teams ranked the areas on their lists to

establish priorities for taking action. Then, to varying degrees, the teams spent the remainder of the study period taking concrete actions targeted to the problems they identified.

### As Actions Increase, Do Calls for Help Decrease?

The researchers counted the number of actions taken by the problem-oriented teams, such as obtaining and carrying out search warrants, making arrests, issuing notices to cease unlawful activities, and scheduling and holding eviction hearings. At three of the six sites, the number of actions taken was significantly larger than at the other three sites.

The researchers then compared the number of team actions with the number of calls made to police to report crimes and seek assistance. They expected that the larger the number of team actions, the fewer calls for police service there would be during the same time period.

The anticipated result held true at only two of the six sites, however. These two sites were among the three sites that had the largest number of team actions. The third site with a great deal of team activity showed no decline in calls for service. The next question, then, was what made the two successful sites different from the rest of the test sites?

### Actions by Police More Effective

The answer, according to the researchers, was that police officers carried out most of the team actions at the two successful sites. These police actions included making arrests, enforcing warrants, conducting investigations, and maintaining general order and civility.

Specifically, at the successful sites, housing authority employees handled fewer actions



and social workers handled hardly any of the actions when compared to the other sites. Housing authority actions typically involved evicting residents, creating and enforcing policies, opening channels of communication with residents, and improving physical features. The social service actions—which involved such services as counseling for drug addiction and psychological problems, assisting with employment and education opportunities, working with youth to keep them in school, and providing messages against violence and teen pregnancy—tended to be noncoercive.

In addition, at the third site that also had a large number of team actions, housing authority employees conducted a higher number of the total actions. So police action appeared to make the difference. But why?

### Is Police Coercion the Key?

The researchers acknowledge that the coercive authority of the police could be a key factor. But they suggest that the team approach, with police officers relying on and being supported by the other team members, was also important to the success seen at the two sites. For example, rather

than conducting random patrols on their own, officers turned to team members for important information on problem residents and potential informants.

Although it may be best, then, to let police lead the way, housing authority employees and social service providers can provide valuable assistance in the process of identifying public housing crime problems and taking the necessary actions to solve them. It is not just police action, but police-led action, that seems to be the formula for success.

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#### For more information

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#### Notes

1. See, for example, Dunworth, Terence, and Aaron J. Saiger, *Drugs and Crime in Public Housing: A Three-City Analysis*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1994 (NCJ 145329).

## Conducting Frugal Evaluations of Programs

*Final report submitted to NIJ, Guide to Frugal Evaluation for Criminal Justice, Michael G. Maxfield, grant number 95-IJ-CX-0029, available from NCJRS (NCJ 187350).*

Scholarly evaluations of criminal justice programs can sometimes leave public officials and justice professionals frustrated. Although they recognize the general value of evaluation, the cost and the occasional lack of practical results often make practitioners and policymakers long for a more economical and functional analysis.

Enter Michael G. Maxfield of the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University. He has taken what he describes as the first step toward an “evaluation 101” primer by creating a guide describing “frugal” evaluation

methods, that is, “approaches to design, measurement, data collection, and interpretation that produce useful findings at relatively low cost.”

Maxfield lists three elements essential to frugal evaluation. Evaluations must be (1) purposive, (2) analytic, and (3) empirical.

### Purposive Evaluations

“Purposive” means that an evaluation should have a specific goal or objective—a reason for doing the evaluation. Maxfield acknowledges that this may seem obvious. However, “just as many programs are launched without clear goals, evaluations are too often begun without some clear view of what is to be learned.” Busy practitioners may simply assume that

*Evaluating new programs through simple yet potentially powerful evaluation methods can identify what really works and, just as importantly, what really doesn't.*

the academic experts conducting the evaluation know what their goal is. The experts, in turn, may assume they know what the practitioners' needs are. Maxfield suggests laying aside such assumptions and explicitly spelling out the purpose prior to the start of the evaluation.

### **Analytic Evaluations**

"Analytic" refers to the logic of the evaluation. All aspects of the evaluation should be rationally connected to one another as well as to the program. Evaluation objectives should be derived from program goals. Similarly, data collection methods should reflect program goals and activities.

Take, for example, a program designed to reduce the amount of graffiti in a city's business district. If the objective in evaluating this program is simply to compare the number of spray-painted walls preprogram to the number of similar walls postprogram, a direct observation of the walls would suffice. Conducting more costly and time-consuming interviews with business owners would be unnecessary.

If, however, the evaluation was intended to measure business owners' satisfaction with the antigraffiti program, such interviews would become essential. The first step would then be to determine the most frugal method of obtaining the business owners' opinions—perhaps through focus groups.

### **Empirical Evaluations**

"Empirical" means that evaluation results will be based on real-world experience—on actual data, not expert judgments. Maxfield emphasizes that empirical evaluation does not have to mean a quantitative evaluation with precise numbers. "Experience comes

in many forms, some more readily quantified than others."

### **Think Flexibility**

Frugal evaluations can take a wide variety of forms, and the ability to remain flexible can be a great asset. "Traditional approaches emphasize control through formal evaluation designs, most notably random experiments. More flexible approaches to evaluation recognize that the three evaluation elements can be applied in situations where traditional, formal designs are not possible."

One situation in which staying flexible is an improvement over traditional evaluation methods is when the program being evaluated has undergone several program changes. "Innovative justice policy is rarely implemented in the kind of stable environment assumed by traditional evaluation designs. Instead, officials often tinker with new interventions after they have been implemented." A frugal evaluation must allow changes in evaluation goals and methods in order to reflect changes in the program being evaluated and to avoid wasted effort in reviewing an original program that is no longer in force.

### **Finding Out What Works**

Maxfield believes that as the number and variety of innovative programs increase, it is becoming "more important to distinguish effective from ineffective directions. This is especially true in a time when public organizations at all levels are being asked to do more with less and being held accountable for whatever they do." Evaluating new programs through simple yet potentially powerful evaluation methods can identify what really works and, just as importantly, what really doesn't.

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#### **For more information**

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- Download *Guide to Frugal Evaluation for Criminal Justice* online at <http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/187350.pdf>.

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ISSUE NO. 251