U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice

National Institute of Justice

Research Preview

Jeremy Travis, Director
September 1998

Linking Community Factors and Individual Development

A summary of a presentation by Felton Earls, Harvard University School of Public Health

Many scholars suggest that young people follow one of several pathways to increasingly violent and antisocial behavior. For example, Rolf Loeber at the University of Pittsburgh has outlined three pathways that youths typically follow to antisocial and criminal behavior.[1] The "authority conflict pathway" is believed to begin early in life with stubborn, disobedient behavior at the preschool level. As the child grows, the behavior progresses into truancy, staying out late at night, and running away. Other children may develop violent tendencies through what theorists call the "overt pathway," which manifests itself through bullying, annoying others, and fighting, eventually progressing to more serious violent acts, such as assault, rape, and murder. The "covert pathway" includes shoplifting, lying, vandalism, and arson and later develops into fraud, burglary, or serious theft. Some scholars argue that the three pathways are so closely intertwined as to be inseparable.

This report describes research to determine the developmental sequences that lead some children to engage in antisocial behavior. This research is a component of the multifaceted Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods sponsored by NIJ with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Institute of Mental Health. The project is collecting and analyzing multiple levels of data on youngsters living in Chicago neighborhoods.[2]

During the past 3 years, the research team has surveyed cohorts of youngsters in selected Chicago communities to explore the pathways to delinquent, criminal, and violent behavior and to understand why some children's antisocial behavior begins early in life and persists throughout much of their lives, while other children go through a short-lived period of delinquent behavior that begins in early adolescence.

Because the forces that drive a youngster to delinquency are complex, the researchers examine multiple levels of informal and formal controls exerted on a youngster's individual and family life, as well as such personal factors as impulse control, temperament, and reading skill. The team measures levels of social control and cohesion as typified by collective rearing of children and regulation of behavior to develop what they call the "collective efficacy" of each of the study communities. Researchers define collective efficacy as mutual trust and a willingness to intervene in the supervision of children and the maintenance of public order.[3]

Communities with high collective efficacy generally experience low homicide and violence rates and low levels of physical and social disorder, while neighborhoods with low collective efficacy suffer high rates of violence and significant physical and social disorder. It is rare to find neighborhoods with high collective efficacy surrounded by communities with low collective efficacy, suggesting that there are spatial effects that extend beyond the geographic boundaries of a single neighborhood.

The researchers seek to discover over the next few years the events and circumstances in a child's life, including community collective efficacy and other community influences, that could set the youngster on the path to delinquency and escalating antisocial behavior.

Designing the project

Chicago was chosen because its large number of diverse neighborhoods allows researchers to sample sufficient numbers of children living in very different social contexts. The study's sample consists of 343 neighborhoods stratified by race, ethnicity, and social class.

For an indepth, longitudinal study of pathways to violence, the research team randomly selected 80 neighborhoods from among the 343 in the study and then selected 100 children of different ages from each of the 80 neighborhoods. The team is particularly interested in children between the ages of 9 and 15 because these are crucial years during which they can capture the distinctions between youths who exhibit an early onset of antisocial behavior and those in whom the onset comes later.

Exposure to violence

Although the FBI and other agencies keep statistics about criminals and their behavior, little information exists about the effects of exposure to real-life violence and how being a victim or a witness are related to rates of offending. The researchers questioned 9-, 12-, and 15-year-olds about their exposure to violence to better understand how communities work to control violence and to determine the extent to which exposure to violence is a predictor of future violence.

Interviews with youths aged 9 to 15 revealed that large numbers of these children in the 80 sample neighborhoods have been victims of or witnesses to violence and that many carry weapons. See exhibit 1. Youngsters were asked to provide specific details on the nature of the crimes they had witnessed to ensure that they were not confusing reality with video games, movies, or television programs.

Exhibit 1: Youths' Self-Reported Experience with Violence

	Age of Youngster		
Exposure to Violence	9	12	15
Heard gunfire	64.0%	76.0%	85%
Saw someone attacked with a knife	7.5	14.0	24
Saw someone shot	8.0	11.0	21
Delinquent Behavior			
Committed a property offense	4.0	10.0	23
Committed an interpersonal offense (such as fighting)	18.0	34.0	60
Carried a weapon	2.0	5.5	19

Correlation between exposure and behavior. The researchers found a strong correlation between exposure to violence and self-reports of violent behavior. Between 30 and 40 percent of the children who reported exposure to violence also displayed significant violent behavior themselves. The research also shows that girls are involved in violence as much as boys, although the nature of the violence is quite different. Girls are more likely than boys to be victims of sexual violence, and boys are more likely to see or to participate in fights, stabbings, or shootings.

Correlation between exposure and fear of crime. Besides the community, family, and individual data they gathered, the team will attempt to analyze how adults relate to children and children relate to one another to identify the significant factors that shape young lives. The researchers surmise that fear levels may be far higher than violence levels throughout the city and that fear may be unrelated to real-life exposure to violence. Adults and children living in "safe" neighborhoods may report higher levels of fear than those living in neighborhoods with higher crime rates.

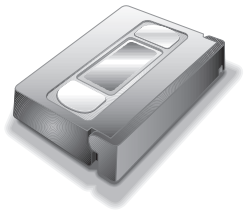
Mixing of social groups and its impact on fear of crime. Because the city's high schools are regional, they bring together youths from different neighborhoods and socioeconomic backgrounds. Researchers plan to examine changes in fear levels as youths from different neighborhoods mingle with one another at high school. Will the fear levels increase for youths from safer neighborhoods, for example, when they mix with youths from neighborhoods with high levels of violence? As families move to other neighborhoods in Chicago, researchers also intend to track the children and analyze how changing environmental factors affect them and how patterns of crime are affected.

Endnotes

1. See, for example, Kelley, B.T., R. Loeber, K. Keenan, and M. DeLamatre, "Developmental Pathways in Boys' Disruptive and Delinquent Behavior," *Bulletin*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, December 1997 (NCJ 165692); and Loeber, R., K. Keenan, and Q. Zhang, "Boys' Experimentation and Persistence in Developmental Pathways Toward Serious Delinquency," *Journal of Child and Family Studies* 6(3)(1997): 321–357.
2. Other publications from the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods include: Earls, F. and C. Visher, *Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods: A Research Update*, Research in Brief, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, February 1997 (NCJ 163603); Selner-O'Hagan, M.B., D.J. Kindlon, S.L. Buka, S.W. Raudenbush, F.J. Earls, *Assessing the Exposure of Urban Youth to Violence: A Summary of a Pilot Study From the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods*, Research Preview, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, November 1996 (FS 000159); Sampson, R., *Communities and Crime: A Study in Chicago*, Research in Progress Videotape, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1996 (NCJ 156924).
3. Sampson, R.J., S.W. Raudenbush, and F. Earls, "Neighborhoods and Violent Crime: A Multilevel Study of Collective Efficacy," *Science* 277 (August 15, 1997): 1–7.

This Research Preview is based on a presentation by Felton Earls, M.D., Professor of Human Behavior and Development, Harvard University School of Public Health. As part of NIJ's Research in Progress Seminar Series, Dr. Earls discussed his work with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals and practitioners. The study (NIJ grant number 93–IJ–CX–K005) is supported by NIJ, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, and the National Institute of Mental Health. A 60-minute VHS videotape, *Linking Community Factors and Individual Development,* is available for $19 ($24 in Canada and other countries). Please ask for NCJ 170603. Use the order form on the next page to obtain this videotape and any of the other tapes now available in the series.

The Latest Criminal Justice Videotape Series from NIJ:



Research in Progress Seminars

Learn about the latest developments in criminal justice research from prominent criminal justice experts.

Each 60-minute tape presents a well-known scholar discussing his or her current studies and how they relate to existing criminal justice research and includes the lecturer's responses to audience questions. In addition to *Linking Community Factors and Individual Development: Progress in the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods,* reported on in this Research Preview, the other tapes available in VHS format are:

NCJ 152235—Alfred Blumstein, Ph.D., Professor, Carnegie Mellon University: *Youth Violence, Guns, and Illicit Drug Markets.*

NCJ 152236—Peter W. Greenwood, Ph.D., Director, Criminal Justice Research Program, The RAND Corporation: *Three Strikes, You're Out: Benefits and Costs of California's New Mandatory-Sentencing Law.*

NCJ 152237—Christian Pfeiffer, Ph.D., Director, Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen: *Sentencing Policy and Crime Rates in Reunified Germany.*

NCJ 152238—Arthur L. Kellermann, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Center for Injury Control, and Associate Professor, Emory University: *Understanding and Preventing Violence: A Public Health Perspective.*

NCJ 152692—James Inciardi, Ph.D., Director, Drug and Alcohol Center, University of Delaware: *A Corrections-Based Continuum of Effective Drug Abuse Treatment.*

NCJ 153271—Marvin Wolfgang, Ph.D., Director, Legal Studies and Criminology, University of Pennsylvania: *Crime in a Birth Cohort: A Replication in the People's Republic of China.*

NCJ 153730—Lawrence W. Sherman, Ph.D., Professor, University of Maryland: *Reducing Gun Violence: Community Policing Against Gun Crime.*

NCJ 153272—Cathy Spatz Widom, Ph.D., Professor, State University of New York–Albany: *The Cycle of Violence Revisited Six Years Later.*

NCJ 153273—Wesley Skogan, Ph.D., Professor, Northwestern University: *Community Policing in Chicago: Fact or Fiction?*

NCJ 153850—Scott H. Decker, Ph.D., Professor, University of Missouri–St. Louis, and Susan Pennell, San Diego Association of Governments: *Monitoring the Illegal Firearms Market.*

NCJ 154277—Terrie Moffitt, Ph.D., Professor, University of Wisconsin: *Partner Violence Among Young Adults.*

NCJ 156923—Orlando Rodriguez, Ph.D., Director, Hispanic Research Center, Fordham University: *The New Immigrant Hispanic Populations: Implications for Crime and Delinquency in the Next Decade.*

NCJ 156924—Robert Sampson, Ph.D., Professor, University of Chicago: *Communities and Crime: A Study in Chicago.*

NCJ 156925—John Monahan, Ph.D., Professor, University of Virginia: *Mental Illness and Violent Crime.*

NCJ 157643—Benjamin E. Saunders, Ph.D., and Dean G. Kilpatrick, Ph.D., Medical University of South Carolina: *Prevalence and Consequences of Child Victimization: Preliminary Results from the National Survey of Adolescents.*

NCJ 159739—Joel H. Garner, Ph.D., Research Director, Joint Centers for Justice Studies: *Use of Force By and Against the Police.*

Additional tapes are listed on the back

To order any of these tapes, please complete and return this form with your payment ($19, U.S.; $24, Canada and other countries) to National Criminal Justice Reference Service, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849–6000. Call 800–851–3420, or e-mail askncjrs@ncjrs.org if you have any questions.

Please send me the following tapes:

Qty.	Presenter Name and NCJ Number	Subtotal
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Daytime phone ( ) _____

___ Payment enclosed (U.S. dollars) ___ Deduct this item from my NCJRS Deposit Account, account no. _____

Charge my: ___ MasterCard ___VISA Account no. _____

Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

NCJ 159740—Kim English, Research Director, Colorado Division of Criminal Justice: *Managing Adult Sex Offenders in Community Settings: A Containment Approach.*

NCJ 160765—Michael Tonry, Ph.D., Professor, University of Minnesota: *Ethnicity, Crime, and Immigration.*

NCJ 160766—David M. Kennedy, Ph.D., Professor, Harvard University: *Juvenile Gun Violence and Gun Markets in Boston.*

NCJ 161259—Robert Crutchfield, Ph.D., Professor, University of Washington: *Labor Markets, Employment, and Crime.*

NCJ 161836—Geoff Alpert, Ph.D., Professor, University of South Carolina: *Police in Pursuit: Policy and Practice.*

NCJ 163056—Dan Brookoff, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Director, Medical Education, Memphis Methodist Hospital: *Drug Use and Domestic Violence.*

NCJ 163057—Marcia Chaiken, Ph.D., Research Director of LINC, Alexandria, VA: *Youth Afterschool Programs and the Role of Law Enforcement.*

NCJ 163058—Eric Wish, Ph.D., Director, Center for Substance Abuse Research, University of Maryland: *Dependence and Drug Treatment Needs Among Adult Arrestees.*

NCJ 163059—Jeffrey Fagan, Ph.D., Professor, Columbia University: *Adolescent Violence: A View From the Street.*

NCJ 163921—Patricia Tjaden, Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Center for Policy Research: *The Crime of Stalking: How Big Is the Problem?*

NCJ 164262—Andrew Golub, Ph.D., Principal Research Associate, National Development and Research Institutes, Inc.: *Crack's Decline: Some Surprises Across U.S. Cities.*

NCJ 164725—Ronald Huff, Ph.D., Professor, Ohio State University: *Criminal Behavior of Gang Members and At-Risk Youths.*

NCJ 164726—James Austin, Ph.D., Executive Vice-President: National Council on Crime & Delinquency: *Sentencing Guidelines: A State Perspective.*

NCJ 165585—Garen Wintemute, M.D., Director, Violence Prevention Research Program, University of California–Davis: *Predicting Criminal Behavior Among Authorized Purchasers of Handguns.*

NCJ 167027—Lorraine Green Mazerolle, Ph.D., Director, Center for Criminal Justice Research, University of Cincinnati: *Using Gunshot Detection Technology in High-Crime Areas.*

NCJ 167028—Stephen Mastrofski, Ph.D.; Roger B. Parks, Ph.D.; Albert J. Reiss, Jr., Ph.D.; Robert E. Worden, Ph.D.: *Community Policing in Action: Lessons From an Observational Study.*

NCJ 167029—Christian Pfeiffer, Ph.D.; Director, Kriminologisches Forschungs-institut Niedersachsen: *Trends in Juvenile Violence in European Countries.*

NCJ 167882—Dennis Kenney, Ph.D., Research Director, Police Executive Research Forum: *Crime in the Schools: A Problem-Solving Approach.*

NCJ 168626—Pamela Lattimore, Ph.D.; Kevin Jack Riley, Ph.D., National Institute of Justice: *Homicide in Eight Cities: Trends, Contexts, and Responses.*

NCJ 169597—Adele Harrell, Ph.D.; Urban Institute: *Drug Courts and the Role of Graduated Sanctions.*

NCJ 170033—David Altschuler, Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University: *Reintegrating Juvenile Offenders Into the Community: OJJDP's Intensive Community-Based Aftercare Demonstration Program.*

NCJ 171156—Todd Clear, Ph.D., Florida State University, and Dina Rose, Ph.D., State University of New York: *When Neighbors Go to Jail: Impact on Attitudes About Formal and Informal Social Control.*

NCJ 171126—Jeffrey Roth, Ph.D., Urban Institute: *The Detroit Handgun Intervention Program: A Court-Based Program for Youthful Handgun Offenders.*

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
National Institute of Justice

Washington, DC 20531

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
DOJ/NIJ
Permit No. G–91