

ICPSR 2800

**Evaluation of Community Policing
Initiatives in Jefferson County,
West Virginia, 1996-1997**

Description

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Bibliographic Description

ICPSR Study No.: 2800

Title: Evaluation of Community Policing Initiatives in Jefferson County, West Virginia, 1996-1997

Principal Investigator(s): Diane C. McCoy, FOCUS (Free Our Citizens of Unhealthy Substances, Jefferson County, West Virginia)

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Scope of Study

Summary: This data collection was designed to evaluate the implementation of community policing initiatives for three police departments in Jefferson County, West Virginia: the Ranson Town Police Department, the West Virginia State Police (Jefferson County Detachment), and the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department. The evaluation was undertaken by the Free Our Citizens of Unhealthy Substances Coalition (FOCUS), a county-based group of citizens who represented all segments of the community, including businesses, churches, local law enforcement agencies, and local governments. The aim was to find answers to the following questions: (1) Can community policing have any detectable and measurable impact in a predominantly rural setting? (2) Did the police department do what they said they would do in their funding application? (3) If they were successful, what factors supported their efforts and were key to their success? and (4) If they were not successful, what problems prevented their success? The coalition conducted citizen surveys to evaluate how much of an impact community policing initiatives had in their county. In January 1996, research assistants conducted a baseline survey of 300 households in the county. Survey responses were intended to gauge residents' fear of crime and to assess how well the police were performing their duties. After one year, the coalition repeated its survey of public attitudes, and research assistants

interviewed another 300 households. The research assumption was that any change in fear of crime or assessment of police performance could reasonably be attributed to these new community policing inventions. Crime reporting variables from the survey included which crime most concerned the respondent, if the respondent would report a crime he or she observed, and whether the respondent would testify about the crime in court. Variables pertaining to level of concern for specific crimes include how concerned respondents were that someone would rob or attack them, break into or vandalize their home, or try to sexually attack them/someone they cared about. Community involvement variables covered participation in community groups or activities, neighborhood associations, church, or informal social activities. Police/citizen interaction variables focused on the number of times respondents had called to report a problem to the police in the last two years, how satisfied they were with how the police handled the problem, the extent to which this police department needed improvement, whether children trusted law enforcement officers, whether police needed to respond more quickly to calls, whether the police needed improved relations with the community, and in the past year whether local police performance had improved/gotten worse. Specific crime information variables include whether the crime occurred in the respondent's neighborhood, whether he/she was the victim, if crime was serious in the respondent's neighborhood versus elsewhere, whether the respondent had considered moving as a result of crime in the neighborhood, and how personal safety had changed in the respondent's neighborhood. Variables relating to community policing include whether the respondent had heard the term "community policing" in the past year, from what source, and what community policing activities the respondent was aware of. Demographic variables include job self-classification, racial/ethnic identity, length of residency, age, gender, marital status, educational status, and respondent's town of residence.

Subject Term(s): community involvement, community organizations, community policing, crime reporting, fear of crime, law enforcement agencies, police citizen interactions, police performance, program evaluation, public opinion, rural areas

Geographic Coverage: United States, West Virginia

Unit of Observation: Individuals.

Universe: All Jefferson County residents in 1996 and 1997.

Data Type: survey data

Data Collection Notes: The user guide, codebook, and data collection instrument are provided as a Portable Document Format (PDF) file. The PDF file format was developed by Adobe Systems Incorporated and can be accessed using

PDF reader software, such as Adobe Acrobat Reader. Information on how to obtain a copy of the Acrobat Reader is provided through the ICPSR Website on the Internet.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study: Community policing to date has been primarily an urban phenomenon, without much attention to its applicability to small towns or rural settings. This study offered a test of the transferability of the community policing practices to a rural community. Police executives in Jefferson County, West Virginia, had identified the need to improve the relations between the police and the community for several reasons. First, the problem of crime was growing faster than police resources. This fact necessitated better utilization of community resources in the form of volunteers, neighborhood watches, and open communication between police and citizens. Second, past public support of the advocacy of local police had been poor. Lastly, local police desired more open dialogue with the African-American sectors of the county. During the summer of 1995, most local police forces in Jefferson County received federal funding from the United States Department of Justice to implement community policing. In applying for these funds, each department outlined specific tasks it intended to undertake with the funds. The Free Our Citizens of Unhealthy Substances Coalition (FOCUS), a county-based group of citizens who represented all segments of the community including businesses, churches, local law enforcement agencies, and local governments, observed and evaluated the implementation of community policing initiatives for three police departments in Jefferson County. Through use of citizen surveys, the coalition set out to evaluate how much of an impact community policing initiatives had in their county. The aim was to find answers to the following questions: (1) Can community policing have any detectable and measurable impact in a predominantly rural setting? (2) Did the police department do what they said they would do in their funding application? (3) If they were successful, what factors supported their efforts and were key to their success? and (4) If they were not successful, what problems prevented their success?

Study Design: Community policing initiatives in Jefferson County were not implemented until late January or February 1996. The FOCUS Coalition conducted a baseline telephone survey of public attitudes between funding in mid-1995 and implementation in early 1996. In January 1996, research assistants surveyed 300 households in the county. Survey responses were intended to gauge residents' fear of crime and to assess how well the police were performing their duties. After one year of community policing, the FOCUS coalition repeated its survey of public attitudes, and research assistants interviewed another 300 households. The research assumption was that any change in fear of crime or assessment of police performance could reasonably be attributed to these new

community policing inventions. The telephone interviews were conducted during evenings and weekends to assure the inclusion of those who worked during the day outside the home. Quality assurance for the interview was provided through pretraining and test interviews, direct supervision, and a comparison of results between interviewers. The interviews were conducted by three research assistants who were hired and trained for that purpose. The interviewers identified the FOCUS coalition as the entity conducting the survey, and provided both its phone number and that of the county sheriff for verification purposes.

Sample: Random sample.

Sources of Information: telephone interviews

Description of Variables: Crime reporting variables from the survey included which crime most concerned the respondent, if the respondent would report a crime he or she observed, and whether the respondent would testify about the crime in court. Variables pertaining to level of concern for specific crimes include how concerned respondents were that someone would rob or attach them, break into or vandalize their home, or try to sexually attach them/someone they cared about. Community involvement variables covered participation in community groups or activities. Police/citizen interaction variables focused on the number of times respondents had called to report a problem to the police in the last two years, how satisfied they were with how the police handled the problem, the extent to which this police department needed improvement, whether children trusted law enforcement officers, whether police needed improved relations with the community, and in the past years whether local police performance had improved/gotten worse. Specific Crime information variables include whether the crime occurred in the respondent's neighborhood, whether he/she was the victim, if crime was serious in the respondent's neighborhood versus elsewhere, whether the respondent had considered moving as a result of crime in the neighborhood, and how personal safety had changed in the respondent's neighborhood. Variables relating to community policing include whether the respondent had heard the term "community policing" in the past year, from what source, and what community policing activities the respondent was aware of. Demographic variables include job self-classification, racial/ethnic identity, length of residency, age, gender, martial status, educational status, and respondent's town of residence.

Response Rates: There was a 30-percent response rate for both the 1996 and 1997 surveys.

Presence of Common Scales: Several Likert-type scales were used.

Extent of Processing: Standardized missing values.

Checked for undocumented or out-of-range codes.

Access and Availability

Note: A list of the data formats available for this study can be found in the [summary of holdings](#). Detailed file-level information (such as record length, case count, and variable count) is listed in the [file manifest](#).

Original ICPSR Release: 2000-03-23

Version History: The last update of this study occurred on 2005-11-04.

2005-11-04 - On 2005-03-14 new files were added to one or more datasets. These files included additional setup files as well as one or more of the following: SAS program, SAS transport, SPSS portable, and Stata system files. The metadata record was revised 2005-11-04 to reflect these additions.

Dataset(s):

- DS1: Evaluation of Community Policing Initiatives in Jefferson County, West Virginia, 1996-1997

Publications

Final Reports and Other Publication Resources: A list of publications related to, or based on, this data collection can be accessed from the study's download page on the NACJD Web site or through the ICPSR Bibliography of Data-Related Literature at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/ICPSR/citations/index.html>. The list of citations includes links to abstracts and publications in Portable Document Format (PDF) files or text files when available.

Final reports and other publications describing research conducted on a variety of criminal justice topics are available from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS). NCJRS was established in 1972 by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), an agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, to provide research findings to criminal justice professionals and researchers. NCJRS operates specialized clearinghouses that are staffed by information specialists who supply a range of reference, referral, and distribution services. Publications can be obtained from NCJRS at NIJ/NCJRS, Box 6000, Rockville, MD, 20849-6000, 800-851-3420 or 301-519-5500. TTY Service for the Hearing Impaired is 877-712-9279 (toll-free) or 301-947-8374 (local). The URL for the NCJRS Web site is:

<http://www.ncjrs.org/>

NIJ Data Resources Program

About the DRP: The National Institute of Justice Data Resources Program (DRP) makes datasets from NIJ-funded research and evaluation projects available to the research community and sponsors research and training activities devoted to secondary data analysis. Datasets are archived by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data (NACJD) at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) at the University of Michigan.

The NACJD maintains a World Wide Web site with instructions for transferring files and sending messages. Criminal justice data funded by the Department of Justice are available via the Internet at this site at no charge to the user. NACJD may be contacted at NACJD/ICPSR, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106-1248, 800-999-0960. The URL for the NACJD Web site is:

<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/NACJD/>