

ICPSR 3337

**Evaluation of the Gang Resistance
Education and Training (GREAT)
Program in the United States,
1995-1999**

Description

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Bibliographic Description

ICPSR Study No.: 3337

Title: Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) Program in the United States, 1995-1999

Principal Investigator(s): Finn-Aage Esbensen, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Funding Agency: United States Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice.

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Scope of Study

Summary: This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the Gang Resistance Education And Training (GREAT) program by surveying five different groups: students in a cross-sectional design (Part 1), law enforcement officers (Part 2), educators (Part 3), parents (Part 4), and students in a longitudinal design (Part 5). Middle school students in the cross-sectional design were surveyed to examine GREAT's short- and long-term effects, and to assess the quality and effectiveness of officer training. Law enforcement officers were surveyed to determine whether their perceptions and expectations of the GREAT program varied depending on sex, race, rank, age, level of education, and length of time working in policing. Data were collected from middle school personnel (administrators, counselors, and teachers) in order to assess educators' attitudes toward and perceptions of the effectiveness of the GREAT program, including the curriculum's appropriateness for middle school students and its effectiveness in delinquency and gang prevention both in the school and in the community. Parents were surveyed to assess their attitudes toward crime and gangs in their community, school prevention programs, the role of police in the school, and their satisfaction with and perceptions of the effectiveness of the GREAT program. The middle school students participating in the longitudinal aspect of this study were surveyed to examine the change in attitudes and behavior, germane to gang activity, over time. Variables for all parts were geared toward assessing perception and attitudes about the police and the

GREAT program and their overall effectiveness, community involvement, neighborhood crime, and gang-related activities.

Subject Term(s): crime prevention, educational programs, educators, gang violence, gangs, police officers, police training, program evaluation, students

Geographic Coverage: United States

Time Period: 1995 - 1999

Unit of Observation: Individuals.

Universe: Part 1: Eighth-grade students in any of 11 selected cities where the GREAT program was administered during the 1993-1994 school year. Part 2: Law enforcement officers who had completed GOT before July 1999. Part 3: Middle school personnel (administrators, teachers, and counselors) in six selected sites with the existence of an operative GREAT program. Part 4: Parents of students, who were from six selected sites participating in the longitudinal component of the study. Part 5: 6th- and 7th-grade students in any of six selected cities where the GREAT program was administered.

Data Type: survey data

Data Collection Notes: The user guide, codebook, and data collection instruments are provided by ICPSR as Portable Document Format (PDF) files. The PDF file format was developed by Adobe Systems Incorporated and can be accessed using PDF reader software, such as the Adobe Acrobat Reader. Information on how to obtain a copy of the Acrobat Reader is provided on the ICPSR Web site.

Methodology

Purpose of the Study: Youth delinquent gangs continue to generate concern among criminal justice professionals and the general public. Considerable agreement exists regarding the high rate of criminal offending among gang members. With the apparent increase in gang membership and activity during the past decade, and the availability of increasingly lethal weapons, the level of criminal activity by gang members has taken on new importance for law enforcement agencies, schools, the community, and prevention efforts. One way to address the growing gang problems is to find ways to prevent youths from joining gangs. In 1991, police officers from the Phoenix Police Department and from Mesa, Glendale, and Tempe, Arizona, and special agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) developed Gang Resistance Education And Training (GREAT), whose stated objective is to (1) reduce gang activity, and (2) educate a population of young people about the consequences of gang

involvement. GREAT, modeled after the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program, is a national, school-based gang prevention program in which uniformed law enforcement officers teach an eight-lesson curriculum to middle school students in one-hour sessions over a nine-week period. The sessions cover such topics as conflict resolution skills, cultural sensitivity, goal setting, and resisting peer pressure. The curriculum also relies on cooperation from school administrators as well as teacher involvement. This study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the GREAT program by surveying students from eleven sites in a cross-sectional design (Part 1), law enforcement officers (Part 2), educators (Part 3), parents (Part 4), and students from six sites, who participated in four years of follow-up interviews (Part 5). Students in middle school, participating in a cross-sectional design, were surveyed to examine GREAT's short- and long-term effects, and to assess the quality and effectiveness of officer training. Law enforcement officers were surveyed to determine whether their perceptions and expectations of the GREAT program varied depending on sex, race, rank, age, level of education, and length of time working in policing. Data were collected from middle school personnel (administrators, counselors, and teachers) in order to assess educators' attitudes and perceptions of the effectiveness of the GREAT program, including the curriculum's appropriateness for middle school students and its effectiveness in delinquency and gang prevention, both in the school and in the community. Parents were surveyed to assess their attitudes toward crime and gangs in their community, school prevention programs, the role of the school in prevention programming, the role of police in the school, and their satisfaction with and perceptions of the effectiveness of the GREAT program. The middle school students participating in the longitudinal aspect of this study were surveyed to examine the change in attitudes and behavior toward gangs and gang-related activities over time.

Study Design: For Part 1, two ex post facto comparison groups were created to provide for assessment of the effectiveness of the GREAT program. Because the program was designed to be taught in 7th grade, 8th-grade students were surveyed to allow for a one-year follow-up while guaranteeing that none of the participants was currently enrolled in the program. This part of the study focused on a one-year follow-up because measurable program effects should be most apparent over a shorter time span and a later follow-up would present greater tactical difficulties as students dispersed to different schools on the transition to senior high school. One of the prerequisites for site selection was to identify cities in which the GREAT program had been administered during the school year 1993-1994 (when the targeted students were 7th-graders). In 1995, questionnaires were administered to all 8th-graders in purposively selected schools who were in attendance on the specified day. The final sample comprised 5,935 8th-grade students from 315 classrooms in 42 schools. Of the respondents, approximately 45 percent reported they

had completed the GREAT program and this group became the treatment group. The remaining respondents who had not completed the GREAT program comprised the comparison group. For Part 2, in order to gauge attitudes of officers with the GREAT program and assess where and when GREAT had been implemented, surveys were mailed to officers who had successfully completed GREAT Officer Training (GOT). Officers had to complete a 40-hour or 80-hour GREAT training session before being allowed to teach the program. These training sessions covered substantive and practical considerations in implementing and administering the program. The ATF coordinated the GOT, and its research staff provided mailing labels of all officers who had completed GOT before July 1999. In August 1999, members of the study's research staff mailed survey packets to approximately 3,900 officers. Along with the survey, each packet consisted of a cover letter explaining the purpose of the evaluation and informing the officers that their responses would be anonymous. The ATF also posted a message on their official Web site encouraging officers to complete and return their surveys. Overall, 1,224 officers returned completed surveys. For Part 3, members of the research team developed a survey instrument, during the summer of 1999, to assess the views of school personnel on a variety of subjects relating to GREAT. Many of the questions included on the questionnaire were incorporated from other questionnaires used in Part 1 and Part 2 to allow for comparison of perceptions across different groups. New questions were also created to address some of the specific concerns about the GREAT curriculum. The survey was reviewed by two school personnel, who offered suggestions for clarity of measurement items. Once schools were selected, the research team identified a contact person at each school who would be willing to distribute and collect the questionnaires, and mail them back to the research office. For their time spent and in order to motivate their efforts, contact persons were monetarily compensated. The principal of each purposively selected middle school was contacted by telephone and the purpose and procedure of the study were explained. Through this initial contact with the principals, individuals acting as contact persons were identified. The contact persons provided an estimate of the number of administrators, teachers, and counselors at their schools, and the appropriate number of questionnaires were mailed to the attention of the contact person along with (1) a letter of explanation of the process to be followed, (2) a completion rate form to be filled out by the contact person, and (3) a consultant fee form so that the contact person could be compensated by the university accounting office. Each questionnaire distributed to school personnel was accompanied by a letter of explanation of the survey's purpose, instructions regarding anonymity and the return of the questionnaire to the contact person, and a ruler as a token of appreciation for answering the survey. Each school was allowed approximately two to three weeks for completion and return of questionnaires. For Part 4, questionnaires were developed by the evaluation team and sent to parents in mid-June 1998 with a cover letter explaining the purpose of

the survey and requesting parents' (or guardians') participation. In order to increase response rates, approximately two weeks after the surveys were sent, reminder postcards were sent to nonrespondents. Collection of surveys ended in early October 1998. For Part 5, the longitudinal research strategy implemented, with a quasi-experimental research design and assignment of classrooms to treatment, allowed for data collection on two groups of students -- those participating in GREAT and those not participating. Both groups of students had an equal risk for future delinquency and gang involvement. The University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board approved a component of the research design allowing passive parental consent (students were included unless specifically prohibited by parents) during the pre- and post-test data collection. These surveys were conducted two weeks prior to and two weeks following completion of the GREAT program. Active parental consent (students were excluded unless written approval for participation was obtained from parents) was required for the four subsequent annual follow-up surveys. To obtain active parental consent, three direct mailings were made to parents of survey participants. Included in the mailings were a cover letter, two copies of the parent consent form for student participation, and a business reply envelope. All parents not responding after the second mailing were contacted by telephone. School personnel also cooperated by distributing consent forms and cover letters at school. The results of the active consent process led to an overall retention of 67 percent of the initial sample. At the beginning of the academic year, class lists from all participating classrooms were obtained. Each student appearing on these lists was assigned a uniquely identifiable number to be used throughout the longitudinal data collection phase. These lists contained names of individuals who had moved or failed to enroll for some other reason. Students whose names did not appear on the lists but who were in attendance were added to the list. The pre-tests were administered during the spring of 1995 to 6th- and 7th-graders. Follow-up surveys were administered to the same sample of students annually from 1996-1999.

Sample: For Part 1, records provided by ATF, the federal agency with oversight of the GREAT program, were used to identify prospective sites in which two or more officers had been trained to teach GREAT prior to January 1994. Cities were selected based on geographic location, population characteristics, and population size. Eleven cities meeting the selection criteria were chosen. The cities selected were Phoenix, Arizona, Torrance, California, Orlando, Florida, Pocatello, Idaho, Will County, Illinois, Kansas City, Missouri, Omaha, Nebraska, Las Cruces, New Mexico, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Providence, Rhode Island, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Reasons for sample exclusion included: (1) a number of cities had not yet implemented the program, (2) not all the sites had processed enough students through the program the prior year for the retrospective data collection planned, and (4) in some sites, police officers had instructed all 7th-graders, so there could be no comparison

group of students who had not received the GREAT training. At the selected sites, schools that had administered the GREAT program during the 1993-1994 school year were chosen. In 1995, questionnaires were administered to all 8th-graders in attendance on the specified day at the selected schools from the 11 selected sites. The final sample comprised 5,935 8th-grade students from 315 classrooms in 42 schools. For Part 2, all officers who had successfully completed GREAT Officer Training (GOT) before July 1999 were included in the sample. For Part 3, six cities were purposively selected for inclusion in the study based upon three criteria: (1) the existence of an operative GREAT program, (2) geographical location to provide geographic and ethnic diversity, and (3) the cooperation of school districts and law enforcement agencies in each site. The six sites included Phoenix, Arizona, Lincoln, Nebraska, Omaha, Nebraska, Las Cruces, New Mexico, Portland, Oregon, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Surveys were mailed to all personnel in selected schools within the six sites. The researcher warns that results for Part 1 and Part 3 should not be generalized to middle school students and personnel as a whole because neither sample was randomly selected. For Part 4, questionnaires were sent to parents of all students participating in the longitudinal component of the evaluation for whom current addresses were available. For Part 5, six cities were purposively selected for inclusion in the longitudinal phase of the study based on three criteria: (1) the existence of a viable GREAT program, (2) geographical diversity, and (3) the cooperation of the school districts and the police department in each site. The selected cities were Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Portland, Oregon, Phoenix, Arizona, Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska, and Las Cruces, New Mexico. The sample for Part 5 was comprised of 22 schools, 153 classrooms, and approximately 3500 students.

Sources of Information: Part 1: Data were collected from self-enumerated survey questionnaires administered to 8th-grade students in selected schools in 11 sites. Part 2: Data were collected from mail-in surveys administered nationally to law enforcement officers who had completed GREAT Officer Training (GOT) before July 1999. Part 3: Data were collected from mail-in surveys administered to selected middle school personnel in six cities. Part 4: Data were collected from mail-in surveys distributed to parents of all students participating in the longitudinal component of the study. Part 5: Data were collected from self-enumerated survey questionnaires.

Description of Variables: Variables in Part 1 (Cross-sectional Design) and Part 5 (Longitudinal Design) include the level of gang activity, fights, and racial conflict in respondents' schools, whether respondents had ever used illegal drugs and if so, which kind, whether they had carried weapons, attacked or hit someone, lied about their age, destroyed property, or skipped school, and whether they felt guilty for any of their behaviors. Respondents were also asked their opinions of gangs, such as whether they were cool, exciting, or fun, or interfered with the safety in the neighborhood or at

school. Students also answered questions designed to assess their attitudes toward the police and their parents. Demographic variables for Parts 1 and 5 include the sex, race, and age of the respondent. Part 2 (Officers) variables provide information on respondents' perceptions of and experience with the GREAT program, the community in which they worked, their law enforcement agency, their agency's involvement with the GREAT program, and their perceptions of the lessons taught. Demographic variables for Part 2 include the sex, race, age, and education level of each respondent. Variables in Part 3 (School Personnel) cover issues facing respondents' schools and students, attitudes and opinions of school-based prevention programs and the delivery methods of prevention programs, the role of police officers in schools, the environment in and around which they worked, the importance of helping youths avoid drugs, alcohol, and delinquency, and the overall effectiveness of the GREAT program. Demographic variables for Part 3 include the sex and race of each respondent. For Part 4, questionnaires sought parents' responses to questions regarding school environment, crime and gangs in the community, school prevention programs, the role of the school in prevention programming, the role of the police in the school, satisfaction with and perceptions of the effectiveness of the GREAT program, and demographics such as race, highest level of education, and income.

Response Rates: Part 1: The response rate is unknown. Part 2: The response rate was 31 percent. Part 3: The response rate was 67 percent. Part 4: The response rate was 32 percent. Part 5: The questionnaire completion rate for the pre- and post-tests were 87 percent and 80 percent, respectively. The annual completion rates for years one, two, three, and four of the follow-up were 86 percent, 76 percent, 69 percent, and 67 percent, respectively.

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

Extent of Processing: Missing data codes were standardized by the principal investigator and ICPSR. ICPSR checked for undocumented codes, produced a codebook, generated SAS and SPSS data definition statements, converted the hardcopy documentation to a PDF file, and reformatted the data and documentation.

Access and Availability

Extent of Collection: This data collection contains five data files with a PDF user guide, a codebook and data collection instruments in a separate PDF file, and SAS and SPSS data definition statements.

Data Format: Logical Record Length with SAS, SPSS, and Stata setup files, SAS transport file, and SPSS portable file

Original ICPSR Release: 2002-06-19

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

2006-03-30 - File UG3337.ALL.PDF was removed from any previous datasets and flagged as a study-level file, so that it will accompany all downloads.

2006-03-30 - File CQ3337.ALL.PDF was removed from any previous datasets and flagged as a study-level file, so that it will accompany all downloads.

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.

2003-06-05 - The parent survey data (Part 4) and student survey data (Part 5), which were collected for the longitudinal component of this research project, have been added to this data collection along with data collection instruments for each part. A revised codebook and user guide reflect the additions of these data. In the first version of these data, Part 1 was named Student Survey Data. It has been renamed to Student Survey Data, Cross-Sectional Design in the codebook and data definition statements, so that it is distinct and distinguishable from Part 5: Student Survey Data, Longitudinal Design.

Note: Detailed file-level information (such as LRECL, case count, and variable count) may be found in the file manifest.

Dataset(s):

- DS1: Student Survey Data, Cross-Sectional Design
- DS2: Law Enforcement Officer Survey Data
- DS3: School Personnel Survey Data
- DS4: Parent Survey Data
- DS5: Student Survey Data, Longitudinal Design

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/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/>