

ANNOTATION:

DESIGN: A total of 89 juvenile conferencing cases consisting of either crimes of violence or property crimes with a direct victim were selected for intensive study. The conferencing sessions were observed and a number of indices of “restorativeness” and other aspects of the process were recorded. Participants were surveyed, and youth were followed for a year after the conference to determine the rate of re-offense, defined to be any new official incident to which the police responded by arrest or apprehension after the conference.

Results: the following variables had a statistically significant bivariate association with the rate of reoffending:

- **Offender characteristics**: residential instability, history of previous offending, and being a non-aboriginal male were associated with increased reoffending.
- **Offense characteristic**: Prior relationship between the offender and the victim: offenders who had committed an offense against someone they knew were less likely to reoffend.
- **Conference-related variables**: presence or absence of the victim was not associated with rate of reoffending. The observers judged 10% of the conference to be a “waste of time” due to lack of remorse, lack of understanding of the impact of the crime, and/or manipulative behavior on the part of the victim. Offenders in these conferences had a higher rate of reoffending. When youths were observed to be remorseful, and when the conference ended on a high, youths were less likely to reoffend. When the outcome was observed to be decided by “genuine consensus,” youths were less likely to reoffend.
- **Multivariate analysis**: if the youth expressed genuine remorse at the conference, odds of reoffending are reduced by about a third, and if the outcome was arrived at by a genuine consensus, odds of reoffending are reduced by about 25%.

The researchers underscore that their methods could not rule out the possibility that feeling remorseful or being ready to negotiate an agreement may have been pre-existing characteristics of the respective youths, rather than something caused or encouraged by the conference process.

GROUP CONFERENCING
JUVENILE
MIXED
RECIDIVISM, PROCESS
OFFENDER DATA, STAFF DATA
OBSERVATION, RECORD DATA, SURVEY
AUS