



## **CSPV POSITION SUMMARY**

### **Positive Peer Culture Programs**

Peer group interventions, widely used in schools and institutional settings, attempt to create a prosocial group climate, group controls on antisocial behavior, and supports for conventional attitudes and behaviors. Guided Group Interaction (GGI) and Positive Peer Culture (PPC) are two programs within this intervention approach designed to restructure peer interactions with the intent of increasing conformity to prosocial norms. Overall, the empirical evaluations of these programs are inconsistent; some evaluations yield no effect, others yield beneficial effects, and still others yield adverse effects. For instance, in the Provo experiment (Empey and Erikson, 1974) in one set of comparison conditions GGI treatment youth (who otherwise would have been incarcerated) were compared to incarcerated youth and found to have significantly fewer arrests after treatment. Conversely, an evaluation of a derivative of GGI, the Peer Culture Development (PCD) program, yielded an adverse effect including more drug use and more serious delinquency (Gottfredson, 1987). There are still other evaluations of peer group-based interventions which yield no significant effect.

There is some evidence that these types of programs help maintain or restore institutional order. For instance, some evaluation reports of schools in which these programs operated indicate that schools became safer over time, school-wide reports of negative peer influence went down, and school-wide belief in conventional rules went up. Therefore, these programs may have valuable environmental effects.

Overall, however, the adverse effects of some peer-based interventions is a serious warning sign for this type of intervention. When implemented, these interventions should be applied only in an experimental context because their beneficial nature and efficacy has not been consistently demonstrated.

## References

- Dishion, T.J., & Andrews, D.W. (1995). Preventing Escalation in Problem Behaviors with High-Risk Young Adolescents: Immediate and 1 Year Outcomes. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 63*(4), 538-548.
- Empey, L.T., & Erikson, M.L. (1974). *The Provo Experiment: Evaluating Community Control of Delinquency*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Gibbs, J.C., Potter, G.B., Barriga, A.Q., & Liao, A.K. (1996). Developing the Helping Skills and Prosocial Motivation of Aggressive Adolescents in Peer Group Programs. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 1*, 283-305.
- Gottfredson D.C. (1987). Peer Group Interventions to Reduce the Risk of Delinquent Behavior: A Selective Review and a New Evaluation. *Criminology, 25*, 671-714.
- Gottfredson D.C., & Gottfredson G.D. (1992). Theory-Guided Investigation: Three Field Experiments. In J. McCord, & R. Tremblay (Eds.), *Preventing Antisocial Behavior: Interventions from Birth Through Adolescence*, (pp. 311-329). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Knight, D. (1970). *The Marshall Program Assessment of a Short-Term Institutionalized Treatment Program. Part II: Amenability to Confrontive Peer Group Treatment*. (Report No. 59). Sacramento, CA: California Youth Authority.
- Leeman, L.W., Gibbs, J.C., & Fuller, D. (1993). Evaluation of a Multi-Component Group Treatment Program for Juvenile Delinquents. *Aggressive Behavior, 19*, 281-292.
- Pilnick, S., Allen R.F., Dubin, H.N., Youtz, A.C., Treat, R.V., White, J., Rose, F.O., & Habas, S. (1967). *From Delinquency to Freedom*. Newark, NJ: Newark State College, Laboratory for Applied Behavioral Sciences, (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. 016-244).
- Sherman, L., Gottfredson, D., MacKenzie, D., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. (1997). *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*. Washington DC: National Institute of Justice Grant Number 96MUMU0019.
- Stephenson, R.M., & Scarpetti, F.R. (1969). Essexfields: A Non-Residential Experiment in Group Centered Rehabilitation of Delinquents. *American Journal of Corrections, 13*, 12-18.
- Tolan, P., & Guerra, N. (1994). *What Works in Reducing Adolescent Violence: An Empirical Review of the Field*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, Institute of Behavioral Science, University of Colorado.

### Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence

University of Colorado, Boulder  
Institute of Behavioral Science  
Campus Box 442  
Boulder, CO 80309-0442  
303/492-8465 Fax 303/443-3297  
E-mail: [cspv@colorado.edu](mailto:cspv@colorado.edu)  
[www.colorado.edu/cspv](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv)