

LRE at Multiple Grade Levels

Jacobson, M. (1979). *An Application of Guttman Facet Design to the Measurement of the Law-Related Attitudes of Selected Elementary, Junior High School, and Juvenile Offender Populations*. Doctoral Dissertation. Michigan State University.

The primary purpose of Jacobson's study was to contribute to the design and methodology of LRE evaluation. The study had three major objectives: (1) to develop an instrument (using the Guttman-Jordan facet design) to assess student attitudes toward the law; (2) to apply that instrument to the law-related attitudes of several youth populations; and (3) to investigate the correlates of those attitudes. Jacobson found the instrument to be a satisfactory measure of attitudes. He also found that positive attitudes toward the law decreased with the age of the population under investigation; that as the age of the population under study increased, knowledge of legal concepts also increased (although not extensive for any group); and that no significant differences could be found in attitudes based on either gender or socioeconomic differences. Finally, Jacobson concluded that elementary school students, when exposed to LRE instruction, displayed significantly higher gain scores in law-related attitudes and knowledge of legal concepts than did a control group.

National Law-Related Education Evaluation Project (NLREEP). (1984). *Law-Related Education Project Final Report, Phase II, Year 3*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, Center for Action Research and the Social Science Education Consortium.

From 1979 to 1984, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funded five national LRE projects to develop and demonstrate effective methods of implementing LRE programs for purposes of primary prevention of juvenile delinquency. Several features distinguished this research and demonstration project from previous studies. The key variables were drawn from the theoretical literature on juvenile delinquency. These included items designed to assess students' commitment, attachment, involvement, belief in the necessity and fairness of rules and law, equality of opportunity, positive labeling, and successful interaction with mainstream peers. Second, the study included a number of items to assess student behavior, captured through student self-reports.

This research found that LRE, if properly implemented, could have significant positive effects on students' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. These positive outcomes were not uniform across the 61 LRE classes involved in the study. One-third of those classes (at all levels) produced favorable outcomes. The research team adduced several characteristics that distinguished the more effective classes from the rest. These differences related to curriculum (proper selection and balance among illustrative case materials); instruction (use of resource persons drawn from the community, sufficient quantity and quality of instruction, strategies that fostered student interaction and cooperative work); and the school context in which LRE was implemented (administrative support and collegial peer relations among LRE teachers).

Shaver, J. (1984). *The Law-Related Education Evaluation Project: A Methodological Critique of the "Impacts on Students" Findings*. Unpublished paper presented at the Rocky Mountain Regional Social Studies Conference, April.

In this paper, Shaver calls to task the first two years (1981-82) of the LRE evaluation study described above (although it seems highly likely that Shaver's major complaints would apply to the third year report as well). At the outset, Shaver stipulates that educational evaluation in the real world makes such studies difficult under the best of circumstances. With that said, he describes in great detail what he believes are

the major shortcomings of the national LRE evaluation studies. First was the issue of the reliability of using students' self-reports in trying to determine delinquent behavior (indeed, there have been widespread debates about this methodology). Second, Shaver was concerned about making cause-and-effect claims based on a quasi-experimental research design. Third, he raised questions about the size of the purported effects and the reports' uses of statistical significance. Fourth, Shaver criticized the report and study for its explicit "theory testing," claiming it therefore did not speak to the concerns of its ostensible audience--teachers and educational decision makers.

Hunter, R. (1987). "Law-Related Educational Practice and Delinquency Theory." *International Journal of Social Education*. 2(2): 52-63.

This article briefly reports the findings of the National Law-Related Education Evaluation Project described in Section A. One strength of this brief article is its explicit attention to the delinquency prevention theory that undergirds many LRE programs. A similar article is Hunter (1991).

Center for Action Research. (1994). *Project PRINCE: Evaluation of Impact on Students*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado, Center for Action Research.

The primary objectives of this project are (1) to reduce the frequency of delinquent acts committed by students and (2) to increase the attitude and social antecedents to law-abiding behavior. Teams trained through Project PRINCE are expected to evaluate the program during its implementation locally. According to these evaluations, eighth- and ninth-grade students taught by teams of teachers and police officers show substantial gains in knowledge of the law and legal processes. In addition, compared to students in the same grades at the same schools (both urban and suburban) who are taught conventional civics, government, or social studies, the LRE students exhibit more favorable attitudes toward school, teachers, police, and law-abiding behavior and commit fewer delinquent acts in and out of school.

Gottfredson, D. (1990). "Changing School Structures to Benefit High-Risk Youth." In P. Leone, ed. *Understanding Troubled and Troubling Youth*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Gottfredson's research focused on three alternative approaches that schools had used to reduce delinquent behaviors of youths who were already at risk for engaging in such problem behaviors. She reported on three programs that had been part of the Delinquency Prevention Through Alternative Education Initiative, funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention between 1980 and 1983. The three programs were (1) a pull-out program, Project PATHE (Positive Action Through Holistic Education), implemented in seven secondary schools in Charleston, SC; (2) an alternative class, Project STATUS (Student Training Through Urban Strategies), implemented in one junior high school and one high school in Pasadena, CA; and (3) an alternative school, the Academy for Community Education (ACE) implemented in Miami, FL. By far the most effective of these models was the alternative class, which combined English, social studies, and a coordinated LRE curriculum. The instructional methods used in this class encouraged active participation (e.g., field experiences, outside resource persons, role plays and simulations). "In summary, the alternative class program was a successful treatment for reducing delinquent behavior. The positive effect appears to have resulted from an increase in attachment to school, a change in the balance of peer influence, and an increase in success experiences at school."

Carroll, J. (1992). *Report of Project LEGAL to National Diffusion Network*. Unpublished Report. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, The Maxwell School.

Since 1976, Project LEGAL, housed at Syracuse University, has conducted evaluations of LRE infused into U.S. history courses. Over nearly two decades, these evaluations have consistently shown significant gains in student knowledge and critical thinking abilities for students in grades 5, 8, and 11 in rural, suburban, and urban school settings.

Colville, J. and Clarken, R. (1992). *Developing Social Responsibility Through Law-Related Education*. Unpublished paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 20-24.

This report describes the development of social responsibility among students using LRE. Social responsibility may be viewed as an essential part of citizenship education, an understanding of the basic democratic principles and values on which laws, government, and society are based. Three major aspects of LRE include expanding students' substantive knowledge and critical thinking skills, improving teacher preparation, and achieving significant changes in students' attitudes. The authors suggest that LRE programs can influence each of these concerns in a positive direction.

Branson, M. (1994). *What Does Research on Political Attitudes and Behavior Tell Us About the Need for Improving Education for Democracy*. Unpublished paper presented at the International Conference on Education for Democracy, Malibu, California, October.

This paper assesses recent research on U.S. political attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and what it suggests about improving education for democracy. Branson examines three surveys: (1) the annual Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup survey that looks at public attitudes toward the public schools; (2) the annual AAmerican Freshman≅ report on attitudes and behaviors of first-time, full-time students attending U.S. colleges and universities; and (3) the most recent survey of the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press on the political beliefs and behaviors of the American public. Branson also examines several other studies that suggest that political attitudes can be influenced by what is taught in American schools (and how it is taught, as well).

SPEC Associates. (1998). *Teens, Crime, and the Community National Outcomes Study on Social Responsibility*. Washington, DC: National Crime Prevention Council.

Teens, Crime and the Community is a program developed by the National Crime Prevention Council and Street Law, Inc. that combines classroom learning about law-related topics with student action projects in an effort to reduce the incidence of teen victimization and engage teens as crime prevention resources in their schools and communities. This study looked at the effect of participating in Teens, Crime, and the Community on middle and high school students' social responsibility.

Twenty TCC instructors in 12 states administered pre/post surveys to 273 TCC students and 246 comparison group students (note that TCC students were more likely to be bilingual, from urban environments, and either adjudicated delinquents or at risk for drug use or delinquency than the comparison students). Results indicated that TCC students showed greater change in the intended direction on six components of social responsibility: social bonding to school, social bonding with CJS authority figures, attitudes toward cooperation/ contribution, pro-social norms, attitudes toward teamwork, and frequency of vandalism in the past two months. Further analysis indicated that the TCC programs implemented with the greatest fidelity produced the greatest improvement in social bonding to school and social bonding to CJS authority figures. Neither number of contact hours in the program nor age of student was significantly related to attitude

change. Being urban predicted greater changes in pro-social norms and being delinquent predicted greater changes in attitudes toward authority figures.