

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Police Attitudes to Court and Conference**

The RISE experiments evaluated the effectiveness of a program of restorative justice conferences run by the Australian Federal Police in Canberra in which half the cases identified as eligible by operational officers ('informants') were randomly assigned to conferences facilitated by specially trained officers. The views of both categories of police involved in the program were sought concerning their opinion about the leniency or severity of court and conference, their fairness and whether they were satisfied with the outcome. Conference facilitators were also asked whether less or more attention would have been paid to the community and the victims if the case had been dealt with in court. Informants were asked whether they thought they would have felt more or less job satisfaction if the case had been dealt with by the alternative treatment, whether court or conference.

#### Drink Driving

Conference facilitators overwhelmingly reported that they were satisfied with the conference outcome and that they thought the outcome was fair. The great majority also thought less attention would have been paid to the community if the case had been dealt with in court.

About two thirds of informants were satisfied with the outcome of the case whether it was court or conference. About three-quarters thought both outcomes were fair and in both treatments about a quarter thought the outcome was too lenient: almost none thought the treatment was too severe. There was no difference expressed in terms of more or less job satisfaction with the alternative treatment and overall there was no significant difference between informants' responses in either condition.

#### Juvenile Personal Property

Again, conference facilitators overwhelmingly reported that they were satisfied with the outcome, that the outcome was fair and neither too severe nor too lenient. The great majority thought less attention would have been paid to the victims if the case had been dealt with in court.

There was no significant difference between the responses of informants in either condition to questions about leniency, severity or fairness of the outcomes; significantly more however of the informants whose cases were assigned to conference than court said they were pleased the cases were treated that way.

#### Juvenile Shoplifting

Again, the great majority of conference facilitators were satisfied with the outcome and felt the outcome was fair. They overwhelmingly agreed that less attention would have been paid to the victims if the case had been dealt with in court.

There were no significant differences between the informants whose case had been assigned to court or conference on any measure of satisfaction, fairness or severity or on job satisfaction with the assigned treatment compared with the alternative. More than three-quarters of both were satisfied with the outcome and thought it was fair.

### Youth Violence

Once again, conference facilitators were overwhelmingly satisfied with the outcome and felt the outcome was fair. Almost all agreed that less attention would have been paid to the victims if they case had gone to court.

There was no significant difference between the informants regarding their satisfaction with the outcome, whether in court or conference, or on fairness and leniency, or on job satisfaction with the assigned treatment compared with the alternative. Significantly more of the informants whose cases were assigned to conference than court, however, said they were pleased the cases were treated that way.

**Table 8-1: Drink Driving – Conference Facilitator Reactions**

	<i>n</i>	Value
Satisfied with the conference outcome	366	89.6%
Not satisfied with the conference outcome	366	3.6%
Felt conference outcome was too lenient	361	11.9%
Felt conference outcome was fair	361	84.2%
Felt conference outcome was too severe	361	84.2%
Less attention would have been paid to community/victims in court	347	80.7%
More attention would have been paid to community/victims in court	347	5.2%

**Table 8-2: Juvenile Personal Property – Conference Facilitator Reactions**

	<i>n</i>	Value
Satisfied with the conference outcome	50	86.0%
Not satisfied with the conference outcome	50	4.0%
Felt conference outcome was too lenient	50	14.0%
Felt conference outcome was fair	50	74.0%
Felt conference outcome was too severe	50	12.0%
Less attention would have been paid to community/victims in court	49	95.9%
More attention would have been paid to community/victims in court	49	0.0%

**Table 8-3: Juvenile Shoplifting – Conference Facilitator Reactions**

	<i>n</i>	Value
Satisfied with the conference outcome	44	77.3%
Not satisfied with the conference outcome	44	9.1%
Felt conference outcome was too lenient	44	15.9%
Felt conference outcome was fair	44	84.1%
Felt conference outcome was too severe	44	0.0%
Less attention would have been paid to community/victims in court	44	88.6%
More attention would have been paid to community/victims in court	44	2.3%

**Table 8-4: Youth Violence – Conference Facilitator Reactions**

	<i>n</i>	Value
Satisfied with the conference outcome	36	88.9%
Not satisfied with the conference outcome	36	11.1%
Felt conference outcome was too lenient	35	8.6%
Felt conference outcome was fair	35	82.9%
Felt conference outcome was too severe	35	8.6%
Less attention would have been paid to community/victims in court	35	97.1%

**Table 8-5: Drink Driving – Informant Reactions, court vs. conference**

	Court		Conference		Sig
	<i>n</i>	Value	<i>n</i>	Value	
Attended the treatment	290	4.8%	245	9.4%	.044
Knew about the outcome from treatment	288	50.3%	245	24.1%	.000
Satisfied with the outcome	142	70.4%	57	62.4%	.236
Felt outcome was too lenient	142	23.2%	57	28.1%	.490
Felt outcome was fair	142	75.3%	57	71.9%	.627
Felt outcome was too severe	142	1.4%	57	0.0%	.158
Pleased with treatment rather than alternative	285	29.5%	240	36.3%	.101
Less job satisfaction with alternative	285	19.0%	238	14.3%	.152
More job satisfaction with alternative	285	11.6%	238	12.2%	.832

**Table 8-6: Juvenile Personal Property – Informant Reactions, court vs. conference**

	Court		Conference		Sig
	<i>n</i>	Value	<i>n</i>	Value	
Attended the treatment	62	32.3%	35	22.9%	.319
Knew about the outcome from treatment	62	74.2%	35	54.3%	.056
Satisfied with the outcome	50	60.0%	19	73.7%	.282
Felt outcome was too lenient	48	35.4%	19	21.1%	.234
Felt outcome was fair	48	64.6%	19	78.9%	.234
Felt outcome was too severe	48	0.0%	19	0.0%	NA
Pleased with treatment rather than alternative	62	40.3%	35	65.7%	.016
Less job satisfaction with alternative	62	17.7%	34	29.4%	.215
More job satisfaction with alternative	62	14.5%	34	8.8%	.425

**Table 8-7: Juvenile Shoplifting – Informant Reactions, court vs. conference**

	Court		Conference		Sig
	<i>n</i>	Value	<i>n</i>	Value	
Attended the treatment	36	30.6%	33	9.1%	.024
Knew about the outcome from treatment	36	72.2%	33	21.2%	.000
Satisfied with the outcome	24	79.2%	7	85.7%	.711
Felt outcome was too lenient	24	12.5%	7	28.6%	.325
Felt outcome was fair	24	83.3%	7	71.4%	.499
Felt outcome was too severe	24	4.2%	7	0.0%	.598
Pleased with treatment rather than alternative	35	37.1%	33	51.5%	.240
Less job satisfaction with alternative	35	11.4%	33	24.2%	.175
More job satisfaction with alternative	35	20.0%	33	9.1%	.206

**Table 8-8: Youth Violence – Informant Reactions, court vs. conference**

	Court		Conference		Sig
	<i>n</i>	Value	<i>n</i>	Value	
Attended the treatment	32	43.8%	27	44.4%	.958
Knew about the outcome from treatment	32	68.8%	27	59.3%	.457
Satisfied with the outcome	22	63.6%	15	86.7%	.106
Felt outcome was too lenient	21	42.9%	15	26.7%	.333
Felt outcome was fair	21	47.6%	15	66.7%	.270
Felt outcome was too severe	21	9.5%	15	6.7%	.768
Pleased with treatment rather than alternative	31	32.3%	26	65.4%	.012
Less job satisfaction with alternative	32	31.2%	26	34.6%	.790
More job satisfaction with alternative	32	28.1%	26	3.8%	.009