THE CAMBRIDGE STUDY IN DELINQUENT DEVELOPMENT

The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (CSDD) is a prospective longitudinal survey of 411 London males who were first studied in 1961 at age 8. They were last interviewed at age 48. Between 2004 and 2013, 551 adult children of these males were interviewed at the average age of 25. In the interests of clarity, the original 411 males are termed generation 2 (G2), their parents are termed generation 1 (G1), and their children are termed generation 3 (G3). The CSDD was begun by Professor Donald West in 1961. Professor David Farrington joined Professor West to work on the CSDD in 1969, and took over the direction of the CSDD in 1982. The latest interviews were carried out in collaboration with Professor Jeremy Coid.

Previous Findings in the CSDD

The results of the CSDD have been summarized in six books (Farrington, Piquero, and Jennings, 2013; Piquero, Farrington, and Blumstein, 2007; West, 1969, 1982; West and Farrington, 1973, 1977), and in five summary articles (Farrington and West, 1981, 1990; Farrington, 1995, 2003; Farrington, Coid, and West, 2009). In addition, over 250 articles have been published describing results from the CSDD; every publication is listed below. The main topics that have been addressed are the development of offending and antisocial behaviour, risk and protective factors, and the effects of life events on the course of offending.

The Sample of G2 Boys

At the time they were first contacted in 1961-62, the G2 boys were all living in a working-class area of South London (which is never identified). The vast majority of the sample was chosen by taking all the boys who were then aged 8-9 and on the registers of six state primary schools within a one mile radius of a research office which had been established. In addition to 399 boys from these six schools, 12 boys from a local school for educationally subnormal children were included in the sample, in an attempt to make it
more representative of the population of boys living in the area. Therefore, the boys were not a probability sample drawn from a population, but rather a complete population of boys of that age in that area at that time.

Most of the G2 boys (357, or 87%) were White in appearance and of British origin, in the sense that they were being brought up by parents who had themselves been brought up in England, Scotland, or Wales. Of the remaining 54 boys, 12 were Afro-Caribbean, having at least one parent of West Indian (usually) or African origin. Of the remaining 42 boys of non-British origin, 14 had at least one parent from the North or South of Ireland, 12 had parents from Cyprus, and the other 16 boys were White and had at least one parent from another Western industrialized country.

On the basis of their fathers’ occupations when they were aged 8, 94% of the G2 boys could be described as working-class (categories III, IV or V on the Registrar General's scale, describing skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual workers), in comparison with the national figure of 78% at that time. The majority of the boys were living in conventional two-parent families with both a father and a mother figure; at age 8, only 6% of the boys had no operative father and only 1% had no operative mother. This was, therefore, overwhelmingly a traditional White, urban, working class sample of British origin.

**Interviews With the G2 Males**

The G2 males have been interviewed nine times, at ages 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 21, 25, 32, and 48. At ages 8, 10, and 14, they were assessed in their schools. The tests in schools measured individual characteristics such as intelligence, attainment, personality, and psychomotor impulsivity. In addition, the boys’ teachers completed questionnaires when the G2 boys were aged about 8, 10, 12, and 14. These furnished data about their troublesome and aggressive school behaviour, their lack of concentration.
or restlessness, their school attainments and their truancy. Ratings were also obtained from the boys’ peers when they were in the primary schools at ages 8 and 10, about such topics as their daring, dishonesty, troublesomeness, and popularity.

At all ages except 21 and 25, the aim was to interview all the G2 males who were still alive. Because of inadequate funding, only about half of the males were interviewed at age 21, and about a quarter at age 25. At age 21, the aim was to interview all the convicted males and an equal number of randomly chosen unconvicted males, and 218 of the 241 target males (90%) were interviewed. At age 25, only 85 males were interviewed. In the other interviews, it was always possible to interview a high proportion of those who were still alive: 405 (99%) at age 14, 399 (97%) at age 16, 389 (95%) at age 18, 378 (94%) at age 32, and 365 (93%) at age 48. At age 48, 17 males had died, five could not be traced, and 24 refused, which meant that 365 out of 394 who were alive were interviewed. The G2 males also completed a medical interview at age 48. They gave written consent for these interviews.

**Interviews With the G2 Females**

At age 32, 289 of the 378 interviewed G2 males (76%) were living with a wife or female cohabitee, and 268 of these G2 females (93%) filled in a questionnaire about child-rearing. At age 48, 299 of the 365 interviewed G2 males (82%) were living with a female partner, and 254 of these G2 females (85%) were interviewed. The G2 females gave written consent for these interviews.

**Interviews With the G1 Parents**

Interviews with the G1 parents were carried out by female social workers who visited their homes. These took place about once a year (in 1961-69) from when the G2 boy was about 8 until when he was aged 14-15 and was in his last year of compulsory education. The primary informant was the mother, although many fathers were also seen. The G1 parents provided details about such matters as family income, family size, their
employment histories, their child-rearing practices (including attitudes, discipline, and parental disharmony), their degree of supervision of the boy, and his temporary or permanent separations from them.

**Interviews With the G3 Children**

Only G3 children aged at least 18 (born up to 1995) were identified for interviewing. We knew about and had identifying information for 691 G3 children. The ethical requirements of the South-East Region Medical Ethics Committee required that we contact the G2 male and/or his female partner in trying to interview the G3 children. Therefore, 20 G3 children whose G2 fathers refused at age 48, and 7 children who father was dead at age 48 (and where no female partner was available) were not eligible to be interviewed. An additional six G3 males who had died and three who were disabled (one Down’s syndrome, one mental health problems, one severe attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder), together with two who did not know that the G2 male was their father, were considered to be not eligible.

Of the 653 eligible G3 children, 551 were interviewed (84%) at the average age of 25; 291 of the 343 G3 males (85%) and 260 of the 310 G3 females (84%). Of the remainder, 39 children refused, 33 parents refused, 13 children could not be traced, 14 were elusive (agreeing or not refusing but never being available to interview), and three were aggressive or problematic. Of the 29 eligible children living abroad since birth, 17 were interviewed, usually by telephone. The G3 children gave written consent for these interviews.

**Criminal Record Searches**

The G1 parents, G2 males and females, and G3 children have been searched in criminal records.

**Security of Data**
All information has been held securely. No person has been identified in any publication. The information has not been used to make any decisions about the data subjects or to have any effect on their lives. For more information about the CSDD, please contact Professor David Farrington: dpf1@cam.ac.uk

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