



U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs

*Presented by*  
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# NLSY97: The Infrastructure for the Largest National Study of Self-Reported Juvenile Offending in the U.S.

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# Self-Reported Delinquency Studies

- Criminology has had a long history of self-reported delinquency studies.
- The most famous ones included youth living in specific locals (e.g., Massachusetts, London, Racine, Pittsburgh, Rochester, Denver).
- The sample sizes were small ( $n \sim 500$ ).
- The samples using involved high risk youth, with possibly a control sample.

# NLSY97 provided a means for the most ambitious self-reported delinquency study

- NLSY has a sample of nearly 10,000 youth ages 12 to 17 in 1996, with a large oversample of minorities.
- NLSY97 included data from a range of domains rarely collected by criminologists: parents/family attributes, parental involvement, living arrangements, health, mobility, time use, schooling, employment, income, dating behaviors, sexual experiences, military experience and neighborhood characteristics.
- In the mid-1990s, DOJ funded a set of items added to the NLSY97 to transform it into a self-reported delinquency study, along with self-reports on justice system involvement.

# Annual self-reported delinquency and justice system involvement items

- RAN AWAY FROM HOME
- SMOKED TOBBACO
- DRANK ALCOHOL
- USED MARIJUANA
- USED HARD DRUGS
- DESTROYED PROPERTY
- STOLE SOMETHING WORTH > \$50
- STOLE SOMETHING WORTH > \$50
- COMMITTED OTHER PROPERTY CRIMES
- SOLD DRUGS
- ASSAULTED SOMEONE
- BELONGED TO A GANG
- CARRIED A GUN
- EVER ARRESTED (**FOR LIST OF CRIMES**)
- EVER CONVICTED
- MONTHS INCARCERATED
- GANG(S) IN R'S NEIGHBORHOOD

# Results

- Many important/influential studies were published.
- Potential of the existing NLSY97 data for crime and justice research has only been scratched.
- Potential of the NLSY97 for criminological research was cut short when DOJ funding ceased and items were removed from the survey.
- [Personal note] NLSY97 linkage to other data could greatly enhance the value of the data to criminology.



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