

Court Review

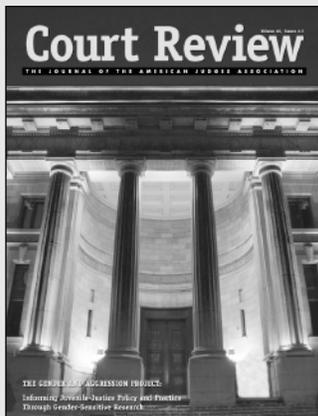
THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN JUDGES ASSOCIATION

Volume 46, Issues 1-2

2009-2010

EDITOR'S NOTE

This double, special issue focuses findings from the “Gender and Aggression Project,” a U.S.-Canadian collaboration of extremely careful and talented social science researchers. Although the project focuses on juveniles, and only some of AJA’s members preside in juvenile cases, the research described here is valuable for AJA’s judges for several reasons, I believe. First, what is true for juveniles is often true for young adults. The psychosocial findings about risk and vulnerability presented in these articles will inform judges about people you see in your courtrooms, even if you are not a juvenile court judge or a general jurisdiction judge with a juvenile docket. Second, we often know less about females than we do about males. Throughout the articles, we learn about differences between juvenile boys and girls. Knowing that there are such differences—and understanding a bit about what some of those differences might be—will help judges in their work. Third, and now we are getting to some of the most important parts of this special issue, the authors present a *program of research*. Science advances in fits and starts. We learn a little each time we study something. But in a *program of research*, one begins to get a deeper, more nuanced sense of complex phenomena. In these articles, the authors communicate the array of insights they have gleaned. They have selected results that have relevance for law and policy. Fourth, the research presented here has been peer-reviewed. The importance of peer-review, I believe, is often underappreciated by the legal profession. Social scientists do not always “get it right,” no matter how hard we try. Independent peers review our work, to check against over-interpretations of the implications of data we have collected, or suggest (or even require) different analyses of the data to ensure that when a study asserts there is a statistically significant relationship between variables or a statistical difference between groups that the correct statistic was used. Often statistics have assumptions that should be met before such tools are deployed. It is easy to overlook this, and peer-review is a system that helps ensure that research is not presented as finding differences (or failing to find differences), when, in fact (if we could know the true state of affairs), it is not the case. Peer-reviewers are integral to the quality control of scientific findings, both in and of themselves and how they are communicated. Peer reviews are not a guarantee of accurate science. Again, any one study may be mistaken in its findings. Nevertheless, peer review helps to make sure that any one study is representing itself correctly, and a program of research serves as a protection against an incorrect inference about the true state of the world based on any one study. Of course, knowledge derived from science is more complex than what I am presenting here, but you get the point. This special issue, then, presents reports of a cross-jurisdictional (indeed, a multinational) program of high-quality research undertaken by careful researchers from the U.S. and Canada. I know reading research is dry, but it is a pleasure to read through these studies and learn about gender and aggression. I hope you agree. —Alan Tomkins



Court Review, the quarterly journal of the American Judges Association, invites the submission of unsolicited, original articles, essays, and book reviews. *Court Review* seeks to provide practical, useful information to the working judges of the United States and Canada. In each issue, we hope to provide information that will be of use to judges in their everyday work, whether in highlighting new procedures or methods of trial, court, or case management, providing substantive information regarding an area of law likely to be encountered by many judges, or by providing background information (such as psychology or other social science research) that can be used by judges in their work. Guidelines for the submission of manuscripts for *Court Review* are set forth on page 5. *Court Review* reserves the right to edit, condense, or reject material submitted for publication.

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Photo credit: Mary Watkins (mayrswatkinsphoto@earthlink.net). The Quebec Court of Appeals hears cases in this columned neoclassical building built in 1926 as the city's main criminal court. It features massive bronze doors that are richly carved and a vast main hall with dome-shaped skylights. The building is now named the Edifice Ernest-Cormier after its architect, who is regarded by many in Canada as the greatest architect of his generation. Cormier died in 1980 at age 94.

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Cite as: 46 Ct. Rev. ____ (2009-2010).