

SPECIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies at the University of California-San Diego

Project on Reforming the Administration of Justice in Mexico

Following from the above, this project will generate new research in four key issue areas: 1) delinquency and organized crime, 2) legal institutions and law enforcement, 3) citizenship and state-society relations, and policy recommendations and possibilities for U.S.-Mexican cooperation. In each of these areas, the project will produce a detailed database to aid the definition of the problem, analyze how it has evolved over time, and develop lines of inquiry in a variety of sub-areas:

1) Delinquency and organized crime

- Indicators of criminal activity and major types of crime
- Criminals and criminal behavior in Mexico
- Rates of criminal recidivism
- Kidnapping and hostage-taking
- Social determinants of delinquency (sociological, historical, and public health)
- Narco-trafficking and international crime syndicates
- Gender and crime

2) Legal institutions and law enforcement

- The executive branch and policymaking on public security issues
- The roles of the Ministerios Públicos and the Procuradurías de Justicia
- The courts, legal institutions, and judicial reform
- Legislative oversight of the executive in public security matters
- The national security apparatus and military involvement in law enforcement
- Organization of police and the institutional culture of law enforcement in Mexico¹
- Resources, budgeting, performance standards, and accountability in law enforcement
- Mechanisms for monitoring accountability, corruption, and abuses of power

3) Citizenship and state-society relations

- Citizen participation and organization in efforts to reform the justice system
- Human rights and freedom of information
- Citizen perceptions of crime, the justice system, and the rule of law
- Indicators of and responses to victimization

¹ Research in this area will encompass a wide range of topics, including: evaluation of police organizations (preventive and punitive; federal, state, and local), monitoring of police behavior, police budgets, wages and benefits, working conditions, training, systems of promotion and discipline, police/government corruption, police-citizen relations, police abuses and preservation of civil rights, police accountability, militarization and “citizen-ization” (“*ciudadanización*”) of police, and special crime-fighting groups (e.g., anti-drug trafficking).

- Application of the rule of law across groups defined by social class, ethnicity, and gender

4) Policy recommendations and possibilities for U.S.-Mexican cooperation

- Changing U.S. and Mexican national security agendas
- Cross-border collaboration on law enforcement and investigations
- Human rights and law enforcement in the bilateral context
- Judicial agreements (on exchange of prisoners, cooperation in anti-drug efforts, etc.)

In the process of analyzing these aspects of Mexico's justice system, participants will analyze the historical developments and cultural context that have affected crime and violence, institutional traditions, and citizen expectations and experiences. The research will also show how relationships among the police, intelligence, and military establishments have changed in recent years. The project's emphasis on historical evolution and social practices will facilitate an assessment of their importance in shaping the pace and modalities of reform in the criminal justice system.

Also, while the proposed project is concerned with the administration of justice generally in Mexico, it will engage the problem at multiple levels of analysis. First, the project will address issues and policies of national scale by focusing on problems confronted by Mexico's federal government, such as the roles of the federal judiciary, the military, and federal law enforcement agencies. Second, the project will pay special attention to the administration of justice in regions that face particular problems, such as the Mexico City metropolitan area and the U.S.-Mexican border region. Finally, the project will conduct comparative state and local case studies that shed light on specific problems and initiatives related to the administration of justice at the state and local level, such as police training programs initiated by local governments in Mexico. Among the top possibilities for state-level case studies are the states of Mexico, Jalisco, and Baja California.

The project will specifically encourage participants to explore new sources of data, some of which have become more accessible due to Mexico's recent transition to democracy at the national level. Some project participants will draw on data from sub-national case studies to identify regional variations, particularly in law enforcement practices and access to the judicial system. For example, the research will analyze the specific problems of policing in the border region in order to evaluate the various forms and results of U.S.-Mexican law enforcement cooperation in areas ranging from extradition of suspects to investigation of crimes involving cross-border activities, reducing violent crimes against unauthorized Mexican migrants to the U.S., and other forms of cooperation through the bi-national Border Linkage Mechanism for Public Safety (BLM).