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Problemandent Research & Development



ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS STATE HOUSE ANNEX, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS

FDWARD B. MCCONNELL
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR
FRED D. FANT
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR



STATE HOUSE ANNEX
TRENTON
NEW JERSEY
08625

June 7, 1973

ACCULATIONS

MEMORANDUM TO:

ALL JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT

JUDGES AND CHIEF PROBATION OFFICERS

RE:

SURVEY OF THE USE OF JUVENILE CONFERENCE

COMMITTEES

Enclosed herewith for your information and use is the report of a "Preliminary Survey of Juvenile Conference Committees," prepared by staff of our Research and Development Service. As you will note from a perusal of the report, there are wide variations in the extent to which such Committees exist and operate within the court system.

Some of the findings would seem to raise questions as to whether all of the Committees are functioning in accordance with the Court Rules and judicial policy, and we thought you would want to give that your attention. Also, assuming the existing Committees are both useful and productive, what justifies their existence in some counties and not in others?

We would be interested in hearing from you relative to the findings of the survey and any recommendations you may have to expand and improve the use and service potential of the Committees.

> Fred W. Fanti Fred D. Fant

Assistant Director for Probation

cc: Trial Court Admin.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE OF THE COURTS



PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF JUVENILE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES IN NEW JERSEY

RESEARCH REPORT #7

June 1, 1973

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PROBATION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

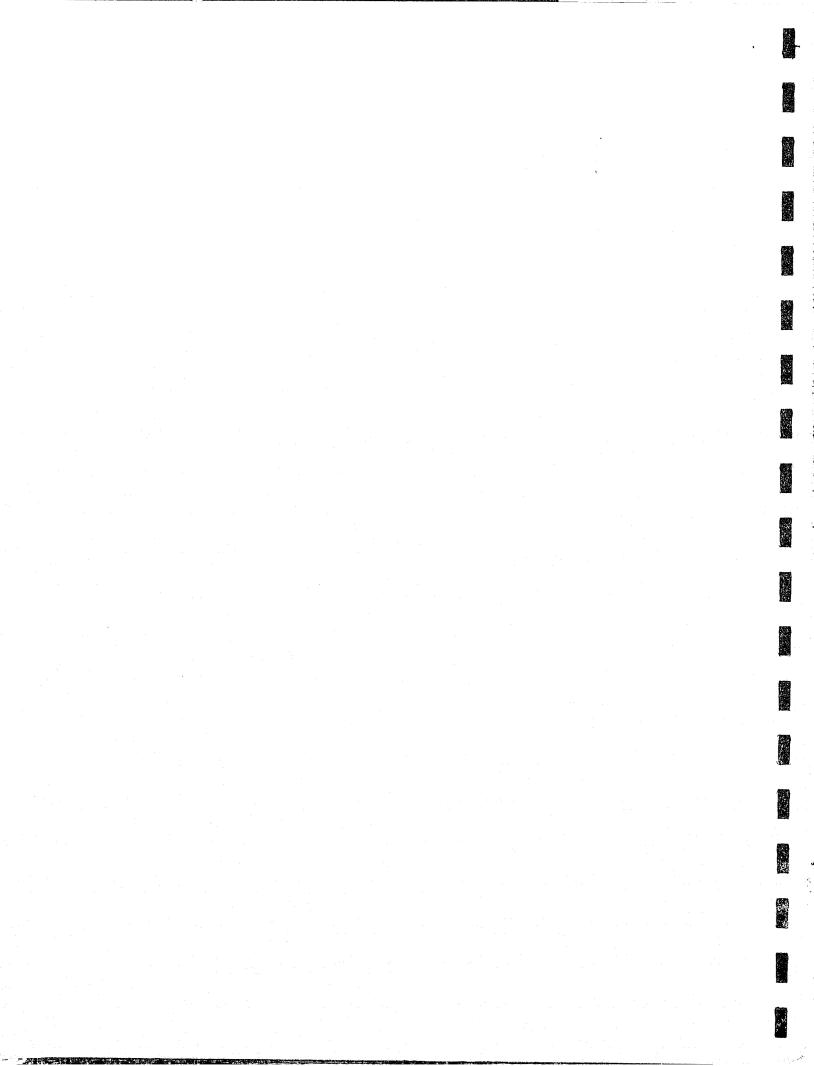
David J. Berkman, Chief

Harvey M. Goldstein, Research Associate J. Frederick Shenk, Research Associate Edward Harkewicz; Research Assistant Archangel Buttaci, Head Statistical Clerk Susan Chester, Principal Clerk Stenographer PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF JUVENILE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

IN NEW JERSEY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	Introduction	1
II.	Authority of the Juvenile Conference Committees	2
CII.	Current Status	4
	A. Overview	4
	B. Selected Membership Characteristics	8
IV.	Assessment	12
V.	Conclusion	14
	Bibliography	15
	Appendix A	
	FIGURES INCLUDED IN REPORT	
	Figure 1. Overview of Juvenile Conference Committees in New Jersey	6
	Figure 2. Statewide Composition of New Jersey Juvenile Conference Committees by Type of Occupation and Sex of Committee Members	9
	Figure 3. Occupational Role Conflicts of Juvenile Conference Committee Members	11



I. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile Conference Committees have been functioning in New Jersey since 1953. Created by the Supreme Court under Rule 5:10-2, they are mandated to deal with a vast middle ground of juvenile behavior, neither harmful enough to require formal adjudication nor innocuous enough to be overlooked by the community.

Implicit in this mandate is the assumption that properly constituted, locally-based citizen committees can forestall future major juvenile misconduct through the setting and sanctioning of behavioral limits. Juvenile Conference Committees are therefore given the authority to meet with juveniles against whom minor complaints have been filed in order to define, explain, and reinforce the substantive norms of the community. It is hoped that appearance before the committees both will motivate and provide the opportunity for behavioral change before more serious infractions occur. At the same time, negative learning which may result from misconduct unreprimanded may be averted. Another benefit to the juvenile is that the stigmatization, however unintentional, of a formal adjudication is avoided.

Other goals of the Juvenile Conference Committee concept include bringing local citizenry in contact with the delinquency problem and reducing the time Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts must spend on minor cases.

In the former, awareness of causes and solutions to the delinquency problem on the part of local citizens is heightened, and in the latter, valuable time is freed for the courts to deal with more serious and persistent infractions.

II. AUTHORITY OF THE JUVENILE CONFERENCE COMMITTEES

Juvenile Conference Committees function as an adjunct to their county Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. However, they do not have the authority or power, in any sense, of these courts. In practice, their power is that of persuasion, and is derived from the sanction given them by the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts and the support they receive from their local communities.

All cases come to the committees on referral from the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts. Only first offenders charged with minor infractions are referred. Types of complaints regularly heard include truancy, minor instances of malicious mischief, trespassing, minor assault and battery, minor thefts, and creating a disturbance in public places. A complaint must be signed and the authenticity of the charge must be determined. Also, the juvenile charged must be a resident of the community over which the committee has jurisdiction. Finally, appearances by the juvenile and his or her family are voluntary.

In accordance with the voluntary nature of the proceedings,
Juvenile Conference Committees have no punitive or
supervisory authority beyond that voluntarily accepted
by the persons appearing before them. However, recommendations,
such as imposition of a curfew, may be formulated, compliance
therewith verified, and a report communicated to the court.
This authority nonwithstanding, the effectiveness of the
Juvenile Conference Committees ultimately must be related
to the ability of the committee members to accurately
define behavioral problems, provide solutions, and elicit
the cooperativeness of their charges.

At the conclusion of each conference a report is forwarded to the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, listing such information as the charge in the complaint, persons present at the conference, and recommendations or actions taken by the committee. Failure of the juvenile to appear or to comply with recommendations results in return of the case to the Court.

III. CURRENT STATUS

A. OVERVIEW

Heretofore, there has been a lack of information about the statewide status of Juvenile Conference Committees and their memberships. Information concerning the counties and communities in which Juvenile Conference Committee programs are functioning, the number and size of committees in operation, the composition of committee membership, or the effectiveness of the committees has not been available.

This report summarizes the current status of Juvenile

Conference Committees in New Jersey. The data, which is
entirely descriptive, was collected by means of a questionnaire sent to all probation departments, requesting the
name, address, occupation, date of appointment, and date of
expiration of appointment of every Juvenile Conference

Committee member in their county. Completed questionnaires
were reviewed and collated by Probation Research and Development
staff. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the committees
was beyond the scope of this survey, but needs to be
accomplished in the future.

At present, 17 counties have active Juvenile Conference Committees. Statewide, there is a total of 279 committees, ranging from 39 in Monmouth County to one in Warren County, with a total of 1,954 members. In addition to Monmouth County, counties with the larger numbers of active committees are Morris (37), Camden (36), Bergen (34), and Essex (29). These six counties have 65 percent of the total committee membership in the state. Committee sizes range from two to nine, although a membership of six is the minimum specified by the Supreme Court. A statewide summary of the status of Juvenile Conference Committees in New Jersey is provided in figure 1, which follows, and county-by-county enumerations are provided in Appendix A.

FIGURE 1. Overview of Juvenile Conference
Committees in New Jersey

COUNTY	ACTIVE JCC?	NO. OF COMMITTEES	TOTAL MEMBERSHIP
Atlantic	Yes	3	22
Bergen	Yes	34	221
Burlington	Yes	18	130
Camden	Yes	36	250
Cape May	No	mane supe	
Cumberland	Yes	4	32
Essex	Yes	29	201
Gloucester	Yes	4	31
Hudson	Yes	9	71
Hunterdon	Yes	5	44
Mercer	Yes	13	73
Middlesex	Yes	17	127
Monmouth	Yes	39	284
Morris	Yes	37	252
Ocean	Yes	6	41
Passaic	Yes	3	28
Salem	No		
Somerset	No		
Sussex	No		
Union	Yes	21	138
Warren	Yes		9
Total	17	279	1,954
			1,734

Although in most counties the committees are under direct supervision of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, in Morris County, the Morris County Probation Department Intake Service, which is responsible to the Morris County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, is coordinating and servicing the Juvenile Conference Committees. The Intake Service, under an experimental program authorized by the Supreme Court in 1971, performs the following administrative functions for the committees:

- . Interviewing prospective committee members and making recommendations to the Juvenile Court.
- . Screening complaints to ensure their propriety.
- . Screening individual case reports submitted by each committee.
- . Defining procedures the committees are to follow whenever referral of a family and child for additional services is necessary.
- . Communicating judicial policies on specific offenses.
- . Consulting and providing assistance to committees when necessary.

In addition to these functions, Intake Service personnel make periodic visits to the committees and arrange for workshops for committee members to increase their interviewing and diagnostic skills.

As shown in figure 1, the counties of Cape May, Salem,
Somerset, and Sussex currently have no active Juvenile
Conference Committees. However, Cape May County does have
an alternative method of handling minor juvenile infractions.
Referees*, one in each municipality, have the authority
to either conduct a hearing or refer a case to the Juvenile
Court for disposition. If a Referee decides to hear a
case in his chambers, he may make several recommendations
to the court, excluding incarceration. These recommendations
become an official disposition only when approved by the
judge of the county Juvenile Court.

B. SELECTED MEMBERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS

1. Type of Occupation

Occupations of Juvenile Conference Committee members were classified by type from the data supplied on the survey questionnaire. The range of occupational types appears in figure 2.

^{*}All Referees are Municipal Court Judges, with the exception of Mr. William F. Hewitt, Chief Probation Officer of Cape May County. Authority for this manner of handling complaints is provided by Supreme Court Rule 5:10-3. Cape May court officials believe the referee system best serves their needs due to the large influx of out-of-county and out-of-state juveniles during the summer months.

FIGURE 2. Statewide Composition of

New Jersey Juvenile Conference Committees by

Type of Occupation and Sex of Committee Members

	NUMBER OF MEMBERS			
TYPE OF OCCUPATION	MALE	<u>FEMALE</u>	TOTAL	<u>.</u>
Professional and semiprofessional	761	132	893	(46%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	171	16	187	(10%)
Housewives	-	178	178	(98)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	84	87	171	(9%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers *	51		51	(3%)
Retired persons	34	8,	42	(2%)
Service workers*	13	9	22	(1%)
Laborers, except farm*	10	1	4 11	(< 1용)
Students	8		8	(<1%)
Farmers and farm laborers *	2		2	(< 1%)
No information reported	254	135	389	(20%)
Total	L,388	(71%) 566(29%)	1,954	(100%)

^{*} Blue-collar occupations.

As indicated, 46 percent of committee members are employed in professional or semiprofessional positions, while about 5 percent are employed in traditional blue collar occupations. These statistics indicate that many committees as now constituted are not representing the socioeconomic composition of the communities they are now serving, as ordered by Supreme Court Rule 5:10-2.

2. Sex of Membership

A breakdown by sex of the 1,954 Juvenile Conference Committee members also is provided in figure 2. As noted, 71 percent of the membership is male, and 29 percent is female. The effectiveness and image of the committees could be improved if the male-to-female ratio were decreased.

3. Role Conflict in Committee Membership

It is in the best interest of juveniles appearing before conference committees, their families, and the Juvenile Conference Committee concept that conflict between occupational and committee roles of members be avoided whenever possible.

It is Supreme Court policy that law enforcement officials and elected government officials (including seekers of office) may not serve on Juvenile Conference Committees. This policy is based on the intent of Supreme Court Rule 5:10-2, which is to divert complaints of minor juvenile misbehavior to an informal hearing outside of the formal criminal justice system. Since law enforcement

officials, probation officers, and elected government officials are a part of the justice system, they may not serve on the Juvenile Conference Committees. Figure 3 identifies the number of persons excluded by Supreme Court policy now serving on the committees.

FIGURE 3

Occupational Role Conflicts of

Juvenile Conference Committee Members

TYPE OF OCCUPATION	NUMBER OF MEMBERS
Law Enforcement Officials	32 (54%)
Probation Officers	26 (44%)
Elected Government Officials	1 (2%)
TOTAL	59 (100%)

Additionally, educators and welfare personnel serving on Juvenile Conference Committees may, in certain cases, find themselves in role conflict situations due to the appearance of a juvenile with whom they are in an academic or client relationship. When members of the committee find themselves in situations where they are already professionally involved with an appearing juvenile or his family, they should voluntarily disqualify themselves from participation in the discussion of that instant hearing.

IV. ASSESSMENT

A full evaluation of the Juvenile Conference Committee concept in New Jersey is beyond the scope of this initial survey. However, from the information collected thus far, four tentative conclusions can be identified. These are:

- . Acceptance of the Juvenile Conference Committee concept varies from county to county and community to community.
- . Representation of socioeconomic characteristics of communities by some committees is lacking.
- . Representation of females is not adequate.
- . Objectivity may be jeopardized by the role conflicts of some members.

Much more needs to be known about this alternative approach to the juvenile delinquency problem before firm conclusions about its viability and effectiveness can be reached.

We know nothing about the level of activities of these committees, the length of time spent in hearing cases, the recommendations that are made, the operational procedures utilized during hearings, the methods used to verify complaints, or even the physical accommodations under which hearings are conducted. Finally, we do not know if these committees are attaining their mandated goal of forestalling future misconduct by juvenile offenders through the setting of limits of behavior.

An evaluation of Juvenile Conference Committees could be accomplished with the cooperation of the committees, using standard research methodology. Recidivist rates could be examined along with such possible interacting factors as type of referral, committee procedural style (such as consultative vs authoritarian), and committee membership composition. Thereby, the full range of activity and effectiveness of these committees could be described and analyzed to determine whether their potential as a helping institution in the community is being fully utilized.

V. CONCLUSION

It is unknown at the present time whether Juvenile Conference Committees are an effective adjunct to Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts, whether they are merely ineffective, or whether they may be unintentionally reinforcing personality or behavioral problems. The fact that such knowledge is totally lacking is a strong indication of the need to pursue an overall assessment of the impact of Juvenile Conference Committees on the delinquency problem.

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APPENDIX A

Type of Occupation of

Juvenile Conference Committee Members by County

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The following tables present county breakdowns of Juvenile Conference Committee membership by type of occupation and sex. Data is presented in both numerical and percentage form. Columns do not always total to 100 percent as figures have been rounded to the nearest percentage point.

Table 1. Atlantic County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	7	1	8 (37%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	3	0	3 (13%)
No information	6	5	11 (50%)
TOTAL	16	. 6	22 (100%)

Table 2. Bergen County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	94	15	109 (49%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	23	10	33 (15%)
Housewives	×	29	29 (13%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	26	0	26 (12%)
Retired persons	6	2	8 (4%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	7	0	7 (3%)
Service workers	2	1	3 (1%)
Laborers, except farm	1	0	1*
No information	3	2	5 (2%)
TOTAL	162	59	221 (100%)

^{*} Less than 1%

Table 3. Burlington County

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
80	50	130 (100%)
80	50	130 (100%)
	80	80 50

^{*} No information for occupations

Table 4. Camden County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	105	15	123 (49%)
Housewives	x	50	50 (20%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	24	6	30 (12%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	5	19	24 (10%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	12	0	12 (5%)
Retired persons	6	0	6 (2%)
Laborers, except farm	1	1	2 (1%)
Service workers	1	. 0	1*
Students	1	0	1*
No information	1	0	1*
TOTAL	156	94	250 (100%)

^{*} Less than 1%

Table 5. Cumberland County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	9	2	11 (35%)
Retired persons	3	2	5 (16%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	3	0	3 (9%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	2	0	2 (6%)
Service workers	1	0	1 (3%)
Housewives	x	1	1 (3%)
No information	8	1	9 (28%)
TOTAL	26	6	32 (100%)

Table 6. Essex County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	102	4	106 (53%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	8	3	11 (5%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	2	1	3 (2%)
Housewives	x	3	3 (1%)
No information	49	29	78 (39%)
TOTAL	161	40	201*(100%)

^{*} In Newark, North, South, East and West wards, members of the Board of Education, Bureau of Attendance, serve on the committees. A member of the Newark Youth Aid Bureau also is usually in attendance. These persons have not been included in the totals.

Table 7. Gloucester County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	15	3	18 (58%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials,			
except farm	5	0	5 (16%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	2	3	5 (16%)
Housewives	x	2	2 (7%)
Laborers, except farm	1	0	1 (3%)
TOTAL	23	8	31 (100%)

Table 8. Hudson County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professional and semiprofessionals	28	10	38 (53%)
Housewives	***	10	10 (14%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	4	6	10 (14%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	5	0	5 (7%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	3	0	3 (4%)
Retired persons	1	0	1 (1%)
Service workers	1	0	1 (1%)
No information	3 · ·	0	3 (4%)
TOTAL	45	26	71 (100%)

Table 9. Hunterdon County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	16	5	21 (48%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	6	1	7 (16%)
Housewives	x	7	7 (16%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	4	0	4 (9%)
Farmers and farm laborers	1	0	1 (2%)
Service workers	1	0	1 (2%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	1	0	1 (2%)
No information	2	0	2 (5%)
TOTAL	31	13	44 (100%)

Table 10. Mercer County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	26	3	29 (39%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	3	9	12 (17%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	7	0	7 (10%)
Housewives	x	5	5 (7%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	2	0	2 (3%)
Retired persons	2	0	2 (3%)
Service workers	1	0	1 (1%)
Laborers, except farm	1	0.	1 (1%)
No information	. · · · · · · 9	5	14 (19%)
TOTAL	51	22	73 (100%)

Table 11. Middlesex County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	54	16	70 (55%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	18	2	20 (15%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	6	5	11 (8%)
Housewives	×	10	10 (8%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	5	0	5 (4%)
Retired persons	5	0	5 (4%)
Students	2	0	2 (2%)
Service workers	0	1	1 (1%)
Laborers, except farm	1	0	1 (1%)
No information	1.	1	2 (2%)
TOTAL	92	35	127 (100%)

Table 12. Monmouth County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	123	21	145 (50%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	35	2	37 (13%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	19	13	32 (11%)
Housewives	×	27	27 (10%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	12	0	12 (4%)
Laborers, except farm	4	0	4 (2%)
Students	4	0	4 (2%)
Retired persons	4	0	4 (2%)
Service workers	3	2	5 (2%)
Farmers and laborers	1	0	1*
No information	8	3	11 (4%)
TOTAL	213	68	281 (100%)

^{*} Less than 1%

Table 13. Morris County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	<u>FEMALE</u>	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	83	25	108 (43%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	5	14	19 (8%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	14	1	15 (6%)
Housewives	×	6	6 (2%)
Retired persons	2	4	6 (2%)
Service workers	0	4	4 (2%)
No information	66	28	94 (37%)
TOTAL	170	82	252 (100%)

Table 14. Ocean County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	11	4	15 (37%)
Housewives	x	8	8 (19%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	6	0	6 (15%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	3	3	6 (15%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	2	0	2 (5%)
Laborers, except farm	1	0	1 (2%)
Students	1	0	1 (2%)
No information	2	0	2 (5%)
TOTAL	26	15	41 (100%)

Table 15. Passaic County

TYPE OF OCCU	PATION OF C	JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	
Professional	and semip	rofessional	16	T.	17 (61%)	
Proprietors, except farm	managers,	and officials,	5	1	6 (21%)	
Housewives			x	5	5 (18%)	
TOTAL			21	7	28 (100%)

Table 16. Union County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTA	<u>L.</u>
Professionals and semiprofessionals	66	4	70	(51%)
Housewives	x	11	11	(88)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	4	4	8	(6%)
Proprietors, managers, and officials, except farm	7	0	7	(5%)
Craftsmen, foremen, operatives, and kindred workers	7	0	7	(5%)
Retired persons	3	0	3	(2%)
Service workers	3	0	3	(2%)
No information	17	12	29	(21%)
TOTAL	107	31	138	(100왕)

Table 17. Warren County

TYPE OF OCCUPATION OF JCC MEMBERS	MALE FEMALE		TOTAL
Professionals and semiprofessionals	4	0	4 (45%)
Housewives	x	2	2 (22%)
Retired persons	2	0	2 (22%)
Clerical, sales, and kindred workers	1	0	1 (11%)
TOTAL	. 7	2	9 (100%)

#