

# **Article: Celebrating the “Null” Finding: Evidence-Based Strategies for Improving Access to Legal Services (Charn 2013)**



In this article, Jeanne Charn discusses empirical studies that tested whether litigants with access to lawyers fared better than litigants with access only to advice or limited assistance. Two of the three studies produced null findings—the litigants with access to lawyers, the treatment group, fared no better than litigants without a lawyer. In this Essay, she proposes that we celebrate these null findings. Charn writes, "I do not doubt that expert lawyer assistance will be necessary in some, perhaps many, cases, but we should reduce procedural and other complexities wherever possible in order to facilitate self-help. We should measure improved access to legal services by the extent to which self-empowered consumers are able

to resolve everyday legal problems on their own or with limited assistance. The flowering of “lawyer-lite” service innovations—services often preferred by consumers—suggests that the practical work of building consumer-centered and consumerdriven legal services delivery is not only possible, it is already underway.”

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Table of Contents