

Translational Criminology

FALL 2018

Promoting knowledge exchange to shape criminal justice research,
practice, and policy

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CEBCP Mission Statement

The Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP), housed within the Department of Criminology, Law and Society at George Mason University, seeks to make scientific research a key component in decisions about crime and justice policies by advancing rigorous studies in criminal justice and criminology through research–practice collaborations and proactively serving as an informational link to practitioners and the policy community. *Translational Criminology* advances this mission by illustrating examples of how research is converted into criminal justice practice.

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FROM THE DIRECTORS

Happy birthday, Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy! On June 21, the CEBCP celebrated its 10th birthday at our annual symposium at George Mason University. Thank you for your participation and for making the symposium successful! We could not have done it without our fantastic panelists, CEBCP faculty and graduate assistants, Mason's events management and catering teams, and of course, all of you.

This year, during our annual meeting with our advisory board, we discussed the continued role that the CEBCP will play in criminal justice policy at local, national, and international levels, and how we might move forward in the next 10 years. With a large and diverse grants portfolio, a strong research team, and the recent inclusion of the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program, the sky is the limit for our center. With the help and advice of our distinguished advisory board members, we will be increasing our research role and outreach in new national policy arenas, including the opioid epidemic, firearms violence, cybercrime, and fraud. And, we will continue to focus and strengthen our interdisciplinary research in evidence-based policing, crime and place, community crime prevention, systematic reviews, criminal justice technology, and the courts.

For those of you who are new to the CEBCP, we are an academic unit within the Department of Criminology, Law and Society at George Mason University. Our work is thus anchored by the core goal of training new scholars and practitioners in doing rigorous and impactful research and research translation. Through our efforts, we focus on advancing our department, college, and university, and we take a keen interest in the development of the scholarly field of criminology and criminal justice. In the last 10 years, seven CEBCP research assistants have received their doctorates and have become professors or researchers at top-ranked criminal justice programs or research think tanks. This fall, we welcome six new criminology doctoral students to work on projects in the CEBCP, bringing us to 16 research assistants for the 2018-19 school year.

Our fall 2018 issue of *Translational Criminology* magazine reflects all of these strengths and our vision. In this issue, you can read about our national efforts, including our new partnership with HIDTA to combat opioid harms as described by Tom Carr, executive director of HIDTA, and Cynthia Lum. We also highlight the contributions of CEBCP faculty and senior fellows to the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Proactive Policing, which was led by David Weisburd and Malay Majmundar (the CEBCP's Cynthia Lum, Steven Mastrofski, and James Bueermann were also members of the committee). Ted Gest from Criminal Justice Journalists and our own Laurie Robinson write about their efforts to reinvigorate the national discourse on criminal justice started by former-President Johnson's Crime Commission and National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (also known as the "Kerner" Commission). These efforts underscore the need for a new national criminal justice commission to address not only our nation's progress in the practice and evaluation of justice, but also our continued (and new)

challenges that need attention. One gravely serious national concern is school safety and particularly the prevention of mass shootings in schools. Anthony Petrosino, Ashley Boal, and Augustus Mays, our partners from WestEd, write about policy formation in this tough area.

Also in this issue, two contributors discuss and update us on two important elements of evidence-based crime policy: experimental research and the use of data and risk assessments for practice. Richard Berk, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, presents a primer for criminal justice risk assessment, addressing criticism and development of risk assessments in criminal justice research and practice. Justin Escamilla and Jessica Reichert at the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and Maureen Hillhouse and Angela Hawken of BetaGov talk about BetaGov's efforts to increase the use of experimentation in the field. Improving on the use of these and other research tools for the benefit of practice is a continued goal of the CEBCP.

And, of course, we highlight the excellent work that practitioners are doing to translate research into practice and for the public. Ken Clary, area commander in the Iowa State Police, discusses innovative and evidence-based approaches he has developed in partnership with the CEBCP to address rural traffic fatalities. Ann Merchant of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) and Ana Salceda, a documentary filmmaker, write about the NAS's Science & Entertainment Exchange, a program in the NAS to help translate research into popular mediums like film. These unique ideas and activities reflect the CEBCP's continuing interests and efforts to understand how research can be translated and institutionalized into the field.

In this issue, you can also hear from our 2018 Distinguished Achievement Award winners, James Bueermann and Edmund McGarrell, and our 2018 inductees into the Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame, Jeffrey Egge and Michael Newman. These individuals have devoted their professional careers to evidence-based crime policy, and we celebrate them as examples of excellence in conducting impactful research and translating it into the field.

Again, we thank all of you who have supported the CEBCP and look forward to another 10 years of impactful research and discourse in evidence-based crime policy.

Cynthia Lum, Director and Editor of *Translational Criminology*
David Weisburd, Executive Director



The 2018 Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy Symposium

Happy 10th birthday, Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy! Our birthday celebration on June 21 was marked by our largest symposium yet, with almost 400 registrants representing more than 200 organizations from federal, state, and local governments; research organizations; foundations; universities; criminal justice research firms; international organizations; and interested members of the community. At the symposium we presented the Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy to Chief James Bueermann of the Police Foundation and Professor Edmund McGarrell of Michigan State University. We also inducted two new members into the Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame: Sergeant Jeffery Egge of the Minneapolis Police Department and Detective Inspector Michael Newman of the Queensland Police Service.

Throughout the day, panelists shared new research evidence on a variety of timely and important topics detailed here.

Responses to the Opioid Epidemic

Executive director Tom Carr of the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) program kicked things off with an overview of the opioid epidemic and how HIDTA, through its many partnerships (including now with CEBCP), is trying to address it. Michael Campbell (Institute for Behavior and Health) followed up with results from one of these HIDTA-funded drug treatment approaches to reduce recidivism. Lora Peppard of George Mason University then discussed the impact of early intervention approaches and integrated care models on substance use and depression.

Critical Issues in Forensic Investigations

The recent decision by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to not renew the National Commission on Forensic Science leaves both the

recommendations of that commission and the role of research for forensics unresolved. Steven Burmeister and Joseph DiZinno, both of George Mason University, discussed the history and current state of forensics research, as well as examples and challenges of forensics research in the field. Kevin Strom, from RTI International, then presented research from a DOJ-funded project examining sexual assault kit processing and reforms. The discussion was led by Billy Leiserson of BL Insights LLC, who reflected on his experience in government and forensics research.

Mental Health and the Police

Chief Howard Hall of the Roanoke Police Department introduced the panel, noting the challenges his law enforcement agency faces when developing responses to mental health crises. Clair White from Mason then discussed findings from research in Baltimore, exploring the nature of the locations from which mental health crisis calls to the police arise. Melissa Morabito, from the University of Massachusetts Lowell, provided preliminary findings from the co-responder model adopted by the Boston Police Department, highlighting the challenges of data collection in this arena. The panel concluded with Amy Watson, from the University of Illinois at Chicago, who presented a rigorous evaluation of crisis intervention teams and mental health crisis response in Chicago.

Communities and Crime Prevention

A lively and well-attended session showcased research from CEBCP faculty and our partners from the Scottish Institute for Policing Research. The center's executive director David Weisburd discussed "hot-off-the-press" findings from an experimental evaluation of a policing intervention aimed at improving community engagement and collective efficacy in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. Denise Martin



A panel presentation at the symposium

from the University of the West of Scotland described qualitative findings from a prevention-focused policing intervention implemented by Police Scotland. Charlotte Gill, CEBCP's deputy director, presented updated results from her ongoing study in the Rainier Beach neighborhood of Seattle. The session was chaired by Claudia Gross-Shader, assistant city auditor for the City of Seattle.

Police Technologies—Body-Worn Cameras

Body-worn cameras are becoming one of the fastest diffusing technologies in law enforcement today. Professor James Willis of George Mason University led this panel, exploring empirical research about using cameras. Geoffrey Raymond of the University of California, Santa Barbara, presented how video data could be used to evaluate and improve police encounters with the public. Andrea Headley from the University of California Berkeley and Ohio State University then discussed her research on the impact of body-worn cameras on officer behavior and perceptions.

Understanding and Addressing Disparity

While a great deal of research has focused on detecting disparity in the criminal justice system, very little has focused on evaluating interventions that might mitigate disparity. This panel brought attention to these concerns. Shaun Gabbidon of Penn State Harrisburg opened the panel with a discussion of racial disparities in criminal justice, both in the past and in the present. April Fernandes from North Carolina State University shared her research on misdemeanor criminal justice contact and racial disparities in employment outcomes. Everette Penn from the University of Houston, Clear Lake, then presented work he and colleagues are doing to improve the relationship between youth and the police, especially minority youth.

Firearms Violence and Policy Responses

A group of leading firearms researchers presented new findings and policy implications from studies addressing multiple dimensions of the nation's gun violence problem. Daniel Webster of Johns Hopkins University examined the crime and community impacts of proactive policing efforts to stem the recent surge of gun violence in Baltimore. April Zeoli of Michigan State University discussed the development and implementation of policies to reduce firearm access and use among perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Garen Wintemute from the University of California, Davis, then presented findings and policy implications from recent research on the risks of violence among legal handgun purchasers who are alcohol abusers.

Police Proactivity—Findings from the National Academy of Sciences Report

This year the National Academies of Sciences formed a committee to tackle the effects and consequences of police proactivity. This panel presented the findings of the committee's consensus report, led by David Weisburd of George Mason University and Malay Majumdar



Professor April Zeoli, of Michigan State University, presenting on firearms policy

from the National Academy of Sciences and joined by committee member Stephen Mastrofski, also from George Mason University. Topics covered included the impact of proactive policing on crime control, community reactions to proactive policing, and the implications of proactivity for law and legality. The consensus report also covered racial bias and disparities in proactive policing and presented recommendations to the field on the use of proactive policing.

School-Based Crime Prevention

Given the recent events in Parkland, Florida, and Santa Fe, Texas, school safety and the role of school police officers continue to be on everyone's minds. In this panel, organized by our friends at the Texas School Safety Center, Texas State University, presenters explored the evidence base underlying policy development on this key issue. Joseph McKenna of Texas State University kicked off the panel with a presentation on how school police officer roles affect responses to student misconduct. Benjamin Fisher from the University of Louisville discussed the findings from a national longitudinal study of school crime and school resource officer roles. Anthony Petrosino of WestEd discussed how lessons from the tragedies in Columbine, Sandy Hook, and Parkland have influenced the development of school safety policy and practice. Paul Hirschfield of Rutgers University rounded out the panel with a discussion and critique of evidence and policy in this area.

Practitioner Innovations and Research in the Field

Practitioners are now leading by example, advocating for evidence-based practices and developing research projects and innovations in practice. The National Institute of Justice Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science (LEADS) Scholars are at the head of this pack and presented their research efforts in this panel, chaired by LEADS mentor Gary Cordner. Wendy Stiver of the Dayton (Ohio) Police Department presented her work on an initiative to reduce infant mortality. Jeremiah Johnson of the Darian (Connecticut) Police Department shared his crime prevention test of police visibility and patrol car lighting. Ken Clary of the Iowa State Patrol presented his

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Policy Responses to a High Profile School Tragedy

BY ANTHONY PETROSINO, ASHLEY BOAL, AND AUGUSTUS MAYS

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Anthony Petrosino



Ashley Boal



Augustus Mays

The policy decision-making process is often assumed to be linear and rational. Policymakers identify a problem and potential solutions, evaluate the options (perhaps examining research evidence for each of the options), and then select and implement the chosen solution. The reality of policy decision-making is often much messier. Some scholars have described the policy-making process as a “garbage can” model in which there are multitudes of challenges and issues, policy stakeholders, and interest groups, with no clear process leading to policy decisions (Cohen, March, and Olsen, 1972). Despite recent attention on ensuring research has a bigger seat at the table to facilitate the development of evidence-based policies (Petrosino and Boruch, 2013), research may only be one minor input into this process, especially when the public calls for swift action.

Intense “focusing events” (Kingdon, 1984) are one catalyst that jumpstarts the policy-making process. Focusing events include incidents that are sudden and relatively rare, impact a defined community, are harmful or have the potential for future harm, and are known to policymakers and the public simultaneously (Birkland, 1997). In the face of intense focusing events, there is often immense media coverage and public outrage, the inclination to make quick policy decisions, and the prioritization of one issue above all others. High profile school tragedies such as the mass shootings that occurred at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999; Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012; and most recently, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, are such intense focusing events, each followed by nonstop news coverage after the crime, extreme policy positions offered by some, and public pressure to develop and enact policies to keep students and staff safe. This paper describes the policy responses by states following these school shootings and poses questions that should be considered to guide policy development following a similar tragedy.

What have policy responses following high profile school tragedies looked like?

Within six months of the tragedy at Columbine High School, policymakers in nearly every state proposed and passed school safety legislation. The content of proposed and enacted legislation varied but often focused on preventive measures such as adding school counselors, urging mental health evaluations of students caught carrying weapons, setting up toll-free tip lines, developing and adopting school safety and emergency plans, increasing penalties for school offenses (what some have called “zero tolerance” policies), and providing state safety grants for school districts. But not all the responses called for quick policy actions.

At the time of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) report (1999a; 1999b), five states had passed legislation to create school safety task forces or commissions and three states passed legislation to develop specialized school safety and violence prevention centers. Furthermore, several states proposed and passed legislation for research or evaluation studies to assess the impact of the policies they instituted.

During 2013, or the first 12 months following the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, more than 450 separate state-level school safety bills were proposed and 108 of those were enacted (Education Week, 2013). The proposed and enacted bills focused on diverse topics including mandating school emergency planning, arming school employees, improving school climate, and putting more police in schools. Although the policies considered after the tragedies at Columbine High School and Sandy Hook Elementary School share some similarities, proposed policies following the tragedy at Columbine High School tended to focus on how schools deal with aberrant student behavior, while proposed policies following the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School tended to focus on guns in schools (e.g., keeping them out of dangerous hands, arming and training school staff) and requiring relevant state agencies to develop and adopt school safety plans.

In the first four months after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018, 50 of the distinct 54 state-level school safety bills that were introduced were passed (ECS, 2018). These bills focused on topics such as instituting more bullying prevention programs, implementing emergency response systems, arming teachers, and providing funds for districts to access to address school safety. The speed at which some of this legislation was passed confirms this tragedy's role as an intense focusing event. For example, three weeks after the massacre, Florida's governor signed the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, which included provisions regarding raising the gun purchase age to 21, eliminating bump stocks that increase the rapid fire of existing weapons, allowing for arming of certain school employees, and enacting procedures for removing guns from those deemed dangerous due to mental illness.

Although the bulk of policy proposals occurred at the state level, it is important to note that federal legislative responses to high profile school tragedies have also occurred. For example, after the tragedy at Columbine High School, the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office introduced the COPS in Schools program, which supported hiring more police officers in schools (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.); after the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School, then-President Obama introduced the Now is the Time initiative to reduce gun violence, which provided funding for initiatives addressing mental health of young persons and school climate (The White House, 2013); and after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, an omnibus funding bill was passed that included the STOP School Violence Act, providing funding to create reporting systems, improve school security, and increase violence prevention training.

At both the federal and state levels, the processes by which policymakers developed policy responses is largely unknown and is an area that would benefit from further research aimed at identifying how decisions were made and the effectiveness of enacted policies. Until more research is available to guide decision-making, it is valuable to think through strategies and key questions that facilitate sound and research-informed policy development.

What do we do in response to future high profile school tragedies?

A call for immediate action to ensure students and staff are safe at school followed each of the three school tragedies discussed here. As school leaders and policymakers grapple with potential approaches to improve school safety, we propose several questions to guide conversation and subsequent decision-making.

- **What research is already out there that can inform the discussion?**

The current emphasis on evidence-based policy highlights the importance of incorporating research into the policy decision-making process. We do not advocate research evidence being the only factor to consider, but it should have a "priority seat at the

table" (Lum & Koper, 2017). Although conducting new research takes time and resources that may not be available quickly enough to inform policy decisions, there is a wealth of information already available on topics such as school safety, mental health, school climate, and gun violence. We advocate that policymakers rely on existing reviews of the literature that competently assess the available research evidence. For example, the Campbell Collaboration is an international organization that prepares, updates, and electronically disseminates high quality reviews in areas such as crime and justice (Farrington & Petrosino, 2000, 2001). When such reviews are not available, techniques such as rapid evidence assessments can be used to quickly get a picture of what the evidence reveals about the issue under consideration (Petrosino et al., 2015). Another possibility is to quickly convene experts who have been working in the field so that policymakers can draw on their input and recommendations about what to do.

- **What is the logic behind the policy proposal?**

Every program or policy has an explicit or implicit theory about why its advocates believe it should work (Rogers, Hacsí, Petrosino, & Huebner, 2000). One useful exercise in drawing up policies is to consider this underlying theory (Petrosino & Turpin-Petrosino, 1999). What is the logic behind the policy and the key mechanisms that are expected to drive results? This exercise should be done in collaboration with a good understanding of the problem itself. These processes can help uncover faulty logic and unnecessary policy elements or can identify other components that are needed to increase the success of the proposed policy.

- **What unintended consequences might occur if the policy is enacted?**

Although the development of policy following high-profile school tragedies is grounded in the desire to keep students safe, the range and intensity of potential side effects for potential policies must be examined. For example, the use of school resource officers (SROs) has increased over the last three decades in response to school violence incidents (Theriot, 2009). Although having SROs on campus ensures law enforcement is poised to respond if a violent incident occurs, their presence may also lead to increased disciplinary action or police involvement for students (Fisher & Hennessy, 2016), which contributes to negative outcomes such as lowered academic achievement and increased negative behavioral outcomes (Fabelo et al., 2011). Similarly, arming teachers and other staff may provide the potential for someone to intervene more quickly to end a school shooting, but it may create a target for a person wanting to get a hold of a weapon, confuse law enforcement entering the scene as to who the active shooter is, and increase accidents in the school with firearms going off inadvertently. Thus, the potential benefits associated with these strategies have to be considered alongside the potential drawbacks so that policies are designed to reduce negative side effects to the extent possible.

- **What are the costs and opportunity costs associated with this policy?**

Rarely will government have the resources to institute every potential policy. New policy often requires the shifting of resources to provide funding to support new staff, systems, procedures, or materials. When considering a policy proposal, defining the associated costs and identifying where those funds will come from is paramount. It is almost always the case that funding for new endeavors will mean other policies and programs will not be funded. For example, a policy requiring the use of metal detectors in schools requires the purchase of the necessary equipment, as well funding for staff tasked with operating and monitoring the metal detectors. The strength of this type of policy proposal should be examined in the context of previous research, the logic of the proposition (e.g., will metal detectors deter individuals who seek to carry out a mass shooting?), the unintended consequences (e.g., hurting school climate), the associated costs (e.g., in 2015, Worcester estimated that metal detectors for its five high schools would cost at least \$70,000 [Corcoran, 2015]), and what will be impacted by diverting funds to support this initiative (e.g., other school safety programming).

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When faced with a high profile school tragedy, one strategy for comprehensively addressing these questions and weighing the pros and cons of various policy options is through the development of school safety commissions or task forces. Although the commissioning of a task force to review the event and make recommendations can be viewed negatively as stalling action, it may be useful in the context of intense focusing events like a mass shooting at a school. Convening a task force allows for a "cooling off" period to prevent hasty decisions that are not grounded in strong research and solid theory. In addition, task forces are typically composed of practitioners, policymakers, and researchers who can bring expertise and diverse voices to discussions about school safety and student well-being. Such a convergence of leaders can provide space for deep discussions and thorough vetting of policy proposals. Following the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, task forces on school safety have already been convened in several states, including Nevada, Utah, and Pennsylvania. Research is needed to understand if this additional time before recommendations are offered and policies are made results in more evidence-based and thoughtful solutions in response to a high profile tragedy.

Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas Program Joins George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy

BY THOMAS CARR AND CYNTHIA LUM

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Cynthia Lum is director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy and a professor in George Mason University's Department of Criminology, Law and Society.

This year, the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) at George Mason University became one of the three university homes for the Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program (HIDTA). The new HIDTA program at Mason (GMU-HIDTA) will employ dozens of analysts and program managers, including a new GMU-HIDTA coordinator who will help facilitate research relationships between HIDTA, CEBCP, and other Mason faculty and centers.

For those who may not be familiar with the HIDTA program, it was created by Congress following the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988¹ and is funded by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The program provides assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States. Currently, 29 HIDTAs are in operation across 50 states, as well as in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia. Funding for HIDTAs must come through a fiduciary (university or law enforcement organization). The program reports to an executive board.

The Washington/Baltimore HIDTA (W/B HIDTA), established in 1994, is the largest HIDTA in operation today. Its mission is to improve interagency collaboration, promote the sharing of accurate, timely information and intelligence, and provide specialized resources to our participating law enforcement, and treatment and criminal justice agencies. The W/B HIDTA is known for its innovative approaches to drug enforcement, treatment, and prevention work that combine evidence-based research with state-of-the-art technology. The W/B HIDTA is the only HIDTA authorized by Congress to fund drug treatment programs.

W/B HIDTA's intelligence-driven initiatives are currently working in 18 sites across Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. A portion of the W/B HIDTA's annual funding, approximately \$3 million, will go to Mason each year to support intelligence analysts and project managers, and foster new research opportunities.

With the support and assistance of the university's Provost's Office; the Office of Sponsored Research; Human Resources; the College of Humanities and Social Sciences; and the Department of Criminology, Law and Society; GMU-HIDTA will be housed in the CEBCP.



Thomas Carr



Cynthia Lum

GMU-HIDTA will provide Mason faculty and students across various disciplines with new data and opportunities to research prevention and treatment interventions to combat drug trafficking, addiction, and related concerns. This is a major opportunity for the university and the nation to integrate cutting-edge practice with cutting-edge science, all in the pursuit of reducing drug use and drug trafficking in the United States. For example, GMU-HIDTA provides opportunities for Mason researchers to access existing HIDTA data, expertise, and law enforcement connections to study addiction, treatment, drug trafficking, and related crimes, as well as law enforcement resources. Our partnership has already led to joint grant applications this year between HIDTA and Mason researchers and faculty to the Department of Justice, and connections between GMU-HIDTA and the Provost's Opioid Initiative.² There will also be opportunities for collaboration and partnership across other departments, schools, and colleges, including Mason's Criminal Investigations and Network Analysis Center, which is a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence. The W/B HIDTA also provides internship and research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, with the hope that these students will become interested in future employment with HIDTA. We are also working on the possibility of developing a certificate program at Mason in intelligence analysis that takes advantage of both HIDTA's and CEBCP's expertise in this area.

Most importantly, the GMU-HIDTA partnership adds to the CEBCP's and to the Department of Criminology, Law and Society's continued Mason goal to engage in impactful research and promote evidence-based practices in criminal justice to develop solutions for America's illicit drug and crime problems. Today's opioid crisis is growing, and enforcement alone will not be enough to address it. Finding ways to prevent, deter, treat, and reduce harm to the community will be a central focus of the GMU-HIDTA relationship.

1 Pub.L. 100-690, 102 Stat. 4181, enacted November 18, 1988, H.R. 5210.

2 See <https://www2.gmu.edu/news/512121>.

A Primer on Criminal Justice Risk Assessments

BY RICHARD BERK

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Of late, there has been strong criticism of risk assessments that help inform criminal justice decisions (Tonry, 2014; Starr, 2014; Angwin et al., 2016). There has also been widespread support, even if somewhat qualified by unease, for fairness and transparency (Hamilton, 2016; Ferguson, 2017). Unfortunately, too much of the public discussion has been based on information that is incomplete or in error. The intent here is to provide a quick summary of the facts. More complete treatments may also be consulted (Berk, 2012).

1. What is a criminal justice risk assessment?

Risk assessments should be distinguished from the uses made of those risk assessments. Although critics often conflate the two, risk assessments themselves are the focus of what follows. Addressing the use and misuse of risk assessments is a topic for another time.

Criminal justice risk assessments are forecasts of illegal or otherwise undesirable behavior. They are most commonly used to help inform decisions about individuals already in custody. For example, risk assessments can help inform decisions at arraignments about whether to detain an offender before his or her next court date. Other kinds of criminal justice decisions that can be informed by risk assessments include charging, sentencing, and parole release. The principal goal is to improve decision-making so that the least restrictive means available are used to improve public safety. Other goals can include reducing incarcerated populations and removing unnecessary burdens on individuals in custody. Some risk assessment tools provide numeric risk scores representing different levels of risk. Other tools provide risk categories, such as whether an individual will be arrested while on probation.

2. Are risk assessments a recent development?

Risk assessments in criminal justice settings are old news. In the United States, risk assessments were introduced into parole hearings in the 1920s. But the methods used to determine risk have evolved. Over time, quantitative data have played a growing role, and statistical procedures have become increasingly sophisticated. For nearly 30 years, we have known that forecasts based on even very simple statistical analyses are more accurate than clinical judgments (Dawes et al., 1989).



Richard Berk

3. How are risk assessment tools developed?

Modern risk assessment tools used in criminal justice settings are “actuarial.” Data on past offenders are analyzed to learn about the types of offenders who are likely to engage in criminal behavior and, for those who do, the types of crimes committed. The result is a set of risk groups that vary in the threat they pose to public safety. For example, one risk group might be males

who were 25 years of age with three prior convictions for violent crimes and two assaults on fellow inmates while in prison. When members of this group were released on parole, 75 percent of them were arrested within 18 months. Such a group would ordinarily be considered high risk.

When risk is estimated for a new offender being considered for parole, that risk is taken from the group in which the offender falls. The risk for the group as a whole becomes the risk for the offender and as such, is a forecast for that individual. To continue the example, a new offender with the same characteristics would be assigned a 75 percent chance (i.e., probability) of being arrested within 18 months of release on parole. The offender likely would be regarded as high risk.

4. What statistical procedures are used?

A wide variety of statistical tools have been used over the years. Some are very simple tabulations, such as what can be done with a spreadsheet. For example, one can determine whether offenders who have many prior convictions are more likely to commit subsequent violent crimes than individuals who have no prior convictions for violent crimes. Over the past several decades, regression analysis has replaced tabular methods, and more recently, machine learning tools are beginning to supplant regression. Regression analysis and machine learning allow one to consider a larger number of possible risk predictors at once, but the underlying goals are effectively the same as the earlier tabulations. The advantage of machine learning over regression analysis is that machine learning algorithms roam far more freely through the data and find patterns that regression analysis cannot. As a result, machine learning forecasts can be more accurate (Fernández-Delgado et al., 2014).

5. What risk factors are used?

The risk factors used depend on the data available. Perhaps the most common risk factor used is the prior criminal history of the offender, broken down into different kinds of crimes. Sometimes the dates on which those crimes occurred are also used. More recent criminal history will often predict more accurately. It can also matter how old offenders were when their earliest crimes were committed. Offenders whose criminal histories began at an early age (e.g., 14 years old) can be especially high risks into their twenties and thirties. The biographical attributes of offenders are often used as well. Age and gender are popular examples. Depending on the criminal justice decision to be made, less common kinds of information may be available. For example, when a parole decision is made, information about an inmate's conduct in prison can be very helpful, such as whether the inmate was written up for misconduct, especially for actions that would be felonies outside of prison (e.g., drug trafficking).

Sometimes a distinction is made between risk factors that are static and risk factors that are dynamic. This distinction depends on the criminal justice decision being made. For example, when parole boards consider releasing an inmate, gender and prior record are static because they cannot change while an inmate is incarcerated. Misconduct in prison or in-prison psychological inventories are dynamic because they can change while an inmate is incarcerated. Some argue that the distinction can be important insofar as dynamic factors that can capture changes in an inmate's current risk contribute more to forecasting accuracy than static factors.

6. How are risk instruments evaluated?

One has "training data" to develop the forecasting procedure, and one has "test data" to determine how accurately the procedure forecasts. For both kinds of data, there are predictors (e.g., age) and information on the behavior that will ultimately be forecasted (e.g., an arrest for armed robbery). Using the associations found in the training data, forecasts are made with the test data. For test data, because the outcome of interest is known, one can see how accurate the forecasts would have been. When a new arrest is forecasted, what is the proportion of the times when it actually happened? When a new arrest is not forecasted, what is the proportion of the times when it did not happen? Test data provide an honest assessment for forecasting performance because they are not used to build the forecasting procedure. When training data are used to develop a forecasting procedure and also to evaluate forecasting performance, there can be serious "overfitting."

Risk assessment tools that prove to be sufficiently accurate are sometimes said to be "validated." That does not mean that the forecasts are always correct. Moreover, risk assessment tools validated for one setting are not necessarily validated for other settings. For example, the mix of offenders considered for release at arraignment can differ dramatically from the mix of offenders considered for release on parole. Likewise, there can be dramatic differences across jurisdictions



(e.g., in gang activity). How well a particular risk assessment procedure generalizes is a matter of degree. It is good practice to undertake setting-specific evaluations with setting-specific test data. New settings can require revised or even new risk tools.

7. How is risk information conveyed?

Forecasts of risk can be provided in different forms. Sometimes a score can be calculated for a given individual from a checklist of proven predictors. Sometimes the score can be produced by a computer or handheld device. Sometimes the score can be summarized by a simple category: high risk or not high risk. And the forecasts can be made for more than two categories, such as likely to commit a violent crime, likely to commit a crime that is not violent, and unlikely to commit any crime. But regardless of the outcomes forecasted, the current intent is to help inform criminal justice decisions, not to determine those decisions.

Some risk procedures also provide measures of uncertainty that can be attached with particular risk forecasts. There can be different degrees of uncertainty associated with forecasts of high risk. There can be different degrees of uncertainty associated with forecasts of low risk. To take a simple example, a forecast that indicates an individual on probation will be arrested for a violent crime can be coupled with the chances that the forecast is wrong. Ideally, both the forecast and its uncertainty are provided to decisionmakers.

8. Are risk assessment procedures black boxes?

Even if a risk tool produces very accurate forecasts, some stakeholders will be skeptical unless the method by which those forecasts are constructed can be understood—the concern is with transparency. Transparency can have a variety of meanings depending on the details of a

forecasting procedure. For example, if one knows the predictive factors used as forecasting inputs, is that enough? Does one also require that there is accurate understanding about how the procedure turns input factors into forecasts? There are different levels and kinds of “how,” some of which may require substantial technical expertise and some of which may not be well understood by anyone.

But to be fair, the same requirements of transparency should be applied to human-produced forecasts, and the complexities are just as daunting. For example, judges will often provide short explanations in court about why a sentence of incarceration is being given, but is that a full and accurate rendering of a judge’s thinking? And might the rationale be post hoc to satisfy various parties in the case or to anticipate subsequent appeals? And what about unconscious biases? In short, the reasoning behind clinical forecasts can be just as opaque as how the most complicated machine learning algorithms function. Better transparency for both clinical forecasts and statistical forecasts is an ongoing challenge.

Conclusions

No risk assessment instrument will forecast with perfect accuracy. There are many legitimate definitions of accuracy, but each will underscore that forecasting mistakes are inevitable. With proper tools, the mistakes can be less common than for current practice. We can do better, but better is not perfect.

No risk assessment instrument in practice will be perfectly fair. There are trade-offs. For example, men commit the vast majority of violent crimes. It follows that a good risk tool will forecast that men are at higher risk to be violent than women. Some might label this inequality of outcome. Yet, one can make the risks comparable for men and women by discounting arrests of men for violent crimes. Violent crimes committed by men are treated as less important forecasting factors than violent crimes committed by women. Inequality of outcome can then be eliminated. But this requires what some call inequality of treatment—there is a thumb on the scale favoring men. In short, there are many different kinds of fairness that can be incompatible (Berk et al., 2017), and trade-offs are unavoidable. There will also be a trade-off between fairness and accuracy. Increases in fairness almost certainly lead to decreases in accuracy. Yet, the goal is to have better performance than current practice, and by that yardstick, many recent risk assessment tools are demonstrably more fair.

Not all forecasting errors are created equal. For example, releasing an inmate on parole who then commits a heinous crime has different consequences from detaining an inmate who would be a model citizen. Both decisions have costs, but most stakeholders would claim the costs of these consequences can be very different. Any good risk assessment tool must build in stakeholder assessments of the relative costs of different kinds of forecasting errors. Current practice has been dominated by an assumption of equal costs, which is typically at variance with the preferences of stakeholders. Very misleading

forecasts can result. But, the problem is easily fixed with modern statistical methods.

Finally, some claim that risk assessments serve only to reinforce criminal justice decisions that are draconian and unfair. That judgment is draconian and unfair. Accurate risk assessments can be used to intelligently reduce prison populations, identify good candidates for diversion programs, or selectively apply less restrictive forms of supervision while at the same time improving public safety. And all this can be done while reducing unfairness that many claim taints current criminal justice decision-making. What’s not to like?

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Utilizing Data and Science to Reduce Serious Injury and Fatality Crashes on Rural Roadways

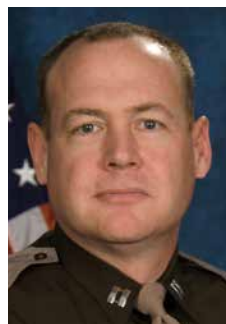
BY KEN CLARY

Ken Clary is a captain with the Iowa State Patrol, currently serving as an area commander responsible for four district offices encompassing 28 counties in Northeast Iowa. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy (269th session), a National Institute of Justice LEADS Scholar, and an executive fellow for the Police Foundation.

As commanders within state police and patrol organizations, we are charged with protecting the citizenry traveling on our roadways. Although some might view violations of traffic laws as lesser offenses, those infractions can often lead to death and/or serious injury if not corrected. In 2016, a total of 37,461 people lost their lives on U.S. roadways,¹ while, in comparison, 16,250 people were reported by the FBI's Uniformed Crime Report as murdered that same year. Traffic crashes result in an enormous loss of life annually and are consistently a leading cause of nonhealth related deaths in the United States.

Law enforcement agencies throughout the nation have attempted to deploy analysis and technology to enhance their operational effectiveness when combating traffic crashes. Often this is done by using historical crash data and targeting enforcement efforts focused in areas where there is a higher propensity for crashes to occur (i.e., Data-Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety, or DDACTS). However, such approaches may be less useful for many areas of the country where crashes occur—rural roadways. More than 4.1 million miles of roadway in the United States are in rural areas, and approximately 70 percent of fatality crashes occur on these rural roadways each year.² Additionally, these crashes may not regularly cluster at locations small enough to identify and target.

Take, for example, my home state of Iowa. There are currently 350 troopers in the Iowa State Patrol (ISP), of which there are 260 whose primary daily responsibility is traffic safety throughout the 56,273 square miles in the state. Annually, 370 people die in traffic crashes in Iowa, somewhere along the state's more than 92,000 miles of roadway.² In Iowa, 76 percent of fatality crashes occur on rural roadways.³ Due to the number of square miles, along with the thousands and thousands of miles of rural roadways where the majority of these



Ken Clary

crashes occur, it is sometimes difficult to determine patterns with data. This is especially true if you are only using data from the most recent past. In order to identify patterns in rural areas, we must often take a larger snapshot of time for patterns to emerge.

The research evidence on crime concentrations provides important clues to tackling crashes on rural roadways. Specifically, crime and accidents often happen because of underlying opportunity structures that contribute to them. Although the exact place for future fatality crashes to occur may be difficult to pinpoint, we can identify with some certainty the causation of these crashes year after year. Leading causes include distracted driving, operating under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, not wearing a seatbelt, and speeding. As an example, more than 92 percent of Iowans wear their seatbelts, but the remaining 8 percent who don't wear their seatbelts make up more than 42 percent of those killed in traffic crashes.⁴ If we could simply get the remaining 8 percent to buckle their belts before they begin the journey that leads to the crash site, we could dramatically drive down traffic fatalities. Identifying law enforcement activities that work to deter and prevent accidents would have profound effects on traffic safety and may be useful in places where events are more spread out. Indeed, "hot spots," where people who engage in risky behavior start their journeys, may be more identifiable than where their crashes occur in rural environments.

This year the ISP and George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy partnered to develop an innovative, targeted, place-based, proactive, and tailored problem-oriented strategy, with the goal of increasing the perception of law enforcement presence and thus significantly reducing traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities in Iowa. Unlike other strategies that focus on where crashes might cluster, ISP and Mason analyzed 10 years of crash data in order to identify potential "hot towns" near crash sites as likely origin points for drivers involved in fatality crashes along Iowa's rural roadways. With this data, they were able to identify two hot towns within each county (for a total of 56 towns), as well as one specific roadway section for each county (an additional 28 hot roadways), that are likely linked to the routine activities and opportunity structures of serious vehicle crashes. Analysis of data and crash reports suggests that victims of serious injury and fatality crashes appear

1 U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2018). Traffic safety facts: 2016 data. Retrieved from <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812521>.

2 Ibid.

3 Iowa Department of Transportation. (2017). *Fatal crashes in Iowa—1988-2016*. Retrieved from <https://iowadot.gov/mvd/stats/fatalcrashes.pdf>.

4 Ibid. See also Iowa Department of Transportation. (2017). *Facts and Stats 2017*. Retrieved from <https://iowadot.gov/mvd/factsandstats>.

to be visiting these towns, becoming intoxicated with drugs or alcohol, and then unsafely operating their vehicles (e.g., speeding, violating seat-belt laws, dangerously operating a motor vehicle).

Perception of police presence is as important as presence itself.⁵ Impaired drivers take a calculated risk of driving their vehicle intoxicated, believing they will not meet law enforcement presence. To combat this perception, tailored interventions have been developed to target both the hot spot road segments for crashes and the activity hot spots within the nearby localities that serve as likely origin points for the drivers. Troopers are assigned two or three counties each shift and perform targeted patrols at designated crash and origin hot spots within those counties randomly and intermittently. While in the hot spots, troopers have high profile, (often somewhat unexpected) interactions with citizens. These interactions can be as simple as a conversation or traffic stop, but they are meant to leave a lasting and reverberating impression on the community. Many of these interactions are nonpunitive and serve a dual function of creating a deterrence effect and improving the perceptions of the state police amongst the community.

In our initiative, night shift troopers (working between 3 p.m. and 1 a.m.) make 10- to 20-minute visits to each hot town, engaging in highly visible citizen interactions at specific locations such as bars, gas stations, and convenience stores, and then moving to the next hot spot. In addition to the evidence for problem-solving, this timing strategy is grounded in research by Koper showing that periodic and unexpected short visits to hot spots are an effective and efficient means of controlling crime and disorder.⁶ Troopers are asked to engage in nonpunitive interactions with bar owners, bartenders, and patrons in a positive manner. The interactions revolve around serving patrons responsibly, ensuring everyone has made arrangements to get home safely, and providing patrons with safety messages, including the importance of wearing seatbelts. Troopers also leave behind literature in convenience stores and other high-volume citizen areas (specifically, literature regarding the leading causes of fatality crashes, which include distracted driving, operating under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, seatbelt usage, and speeding). Troopers might also position themselves along highly traveled roadways to increase their visibility and presence. Based on the deterrence literature, all of these approaches are intended to create a “media” presence so that word spreads in these places of increased police interest and presence in reducing serious and fatal vehicle crashes.⁷

To provide some actual examples, a state trooper might enter a bar, sit at a table with a patron, and strike up a conversation about hoping the patron is having a good time and has a safe way to get home. That patron may not have seen a trooper in their town for months, and especially not inside a local bar. Such interactions are unusual, and if



done politely and respectfully, may become something that the patron and others recount in the days ahead, even if that officer is not able to visit that particular bar again for some time. Yet this small gesture could create an impression on patrons to at least focus on the consequences of their behaviors or perhaps believe there is greater police presence in the area if they do choose to drive while intoxicated.

Or, perhaps a trooper often sees an elderly farmer every day, driving through town without wearing his seatbelt to go have his morning coffee with his buddies. The trooper stops the farmer, not to write a ticket, but to have a conversation about a recent fatality wreck that he handled because the driver wasn't wearing his seatbelt. The trooper expresses concern about the farmer's safety, without necessarily being punitive. That farmer is still going to go have coffee that morning, but he might tell his friends about the stop, what the officer told him, and how he was treated. Again, such efforts may have more of a lasting impression on the farmer (and his friends).

These approaches, in addition to enforcement activities, may provide an extra problem-solving layer to getting at the root of fatality crashes. Using analysis to identify strategic locations of the origins and pathways to crash sites to implement these tactics is also a key component of such strategies. All of these interactions are intended to get people to see and talk about trooper actions with others, thus increasing their perceptions of law enforcement presence, even though hot origin locations might only be visited by troopers for short periods of time. Increasing the perception of police presence may also have a preventative impact on other crimes. Also important is educating officers on different ways that they can engage with the public at these places.

This is a unique approach to traffic enforcement, as it is proactive and preventative—not reactive, as most traffic enforcement efforts tend to be. The ISP and researchers at George Mason University are working together to collect a variety of performance measures for this multi-year project to ultimately conduct a quasi-experimental evalu-

5 Nagin, D. S., Solow, R. M., and Lum, C. (2015). Deterrence, criminal opportunities, and police. *Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 53(1), 74–100.

6 Koper, C. S. (1995). Just enough police presence: Reducing crime and disorderly behavior by optimizing patrol time in crime hot spots. *Justice Quarterly*, 12(4), 649–72.

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50 Years Later: The Kerner Commission Legacy

BY LAURIE O. ROBINSON

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America was rocked in 1967 by weeks of racial unrest in cities across the country. In Newark, New Jersey, and Detroit, Michigan, alone, 69 people died. In late July of that year, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed an 11-member blue ribbon body, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders—which came to be known after its chair, Illinois Governor Otto Kerner—with the charge of investigating what happened, why it happened, and what could be done to prevent its happening again.¹

Seven months later, the commission issued its report. It garnered broad attention with a stark warning that “our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”² Yet, despite the attention the Kerner report received in 1968 and its forward-looking recommendations in many areas—including policing—it largely sank into oblivion in the succeeding decades. A look back at this document half a century later is therefore well in order.

The report vividly described the racial inequities and challenges blacks in America’s center cities faced, including poor housing, high infant mortality, deficient schools, and exploitation by local businesses.³ Illustrating the problem of poor sanitation services, the report cited 14,000 cases of rat bites in the United States in 1965, mostly in inner cities.⁴ In each area, the report called for ambitious federal programs to tackle the problems in concert with local government. It also urged reforms in how criminal courts should handle the administration of justice in the aftermath of disorders.⁵

But it was in the area of policing that the commission made some of its central findings and recommendations. The report criticized law enforcement not only for the way it responded to the riots, but also as a key factor in triggering the disorders. And from Detroit to Watts, Los Angeles, the commission found racial tensions reflected community grievances with not only the police, but with the broader criminal justice system.⁶ In fact, the commission wrote, “the policeman in the ghetto is the symbol not only of law, but of the entire system of law enforcement and criminal justice.”⁷



Laurie O. Robinson

The commission did not find single or simple answers to the racial disorders it studied. As its report stated, “The police are not merely a ‘spark’ factor. To some Negroes, police have come to symbolize white power, white racism, and white repression. . . . The atmosphere of hostility and cynicism is reinforced by a widespread belief among Negroes in the existence of police brutality and in a ‘double standard’ of justice and protection—one for Negroes and one for whites.”⁸

To assess what led to the riots, the commission conducted a survey of residents in 23 cities where disorders had occurred. “Police practices” emerged as the most frequently cited grievance. It was also the one rated at the highest “level of intensity” by residents.⁹ Yet the commission also made clear that “the blame must be shared by the total society.”¹⁰ It asserted that, “the policeman in the ghetto is a symbol, finally, of a society from which many ghetto Negroes are increasingly alienated.”¹¹ Residents frequently called for stronger police protection, the report noted, but then raised concerns if the response was too aggressive, with few mechanisms in place to effectively handle grievances.¹²

In order to address these problems, the commission set out a number of recommendations. It urged local jurisdictions and police agencies to

- provide better police protection in inner-city neighborhoods to address both residents’ fear of high crime and the belief by many that a dual standard of law enforcement existed for blacks and whites;
- set up a mechanism for grievances against the police and other city employees;
- review law enforcement operations in the inner city to ensure proper police conduct and eliminate abrasive practices;
- adopt policy guidelines to assist officers in such areas as the use of stop and frisk; use of alternatives to arrest, such as summons; and, more broadly, on use of force;

1 *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (The Kerner Report)*. (1968). New York, NY: Bantam Books.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*, 266-274.

4 *Ibid.*, 273.

5 *Ibid.*, 19.

6 *Ibid.*, 299.

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*, 11.

9 *Ibid.*, 7.

10 *Ibid.*, 17.

11 *Ibid.*, 300.

12 *Ibid.*, 17.

13 *Ibid.*



Roy Wilkins, Governor Otto Kerner (chairman), and President Lyndon B. Johnson. Photo courtesy of the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

- use innovative programs to ensure broad community support for police;
- set up dialogue with inner-city residents to strengthen ongoing lines of communication with them;
- recruit more minorities onto the police force and review promotion policies to ensure fair promotion for minority officers; and
- create “community service officer” positions for young black youth to interest them in police work.¹³

The commission also looked critically at how police had dealt with the disorders themselves, and commissioned the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to conduct a study on riot control planning by 30 large police departments. The study found all of them possessed some kind of written plans, but there was great variation among these plans—and many had flaws.¹⁴ Echoing today’s debates about militarization of law enforcement, the commission took a strong position against providing police with such weapons as machine guns and tanks. “We should not,” the report declared, “attempt to convert our police into combat troops equipped for urban warfare.”¹⁵ And foreshadowing discussions today about police legitimacy, the commission declared that “the true source of police strength in maintaining order lies in the respect and goodwill of the public they serve.”¹⁶

To provide guidance for local jurisdictions in how to handle riot prevention and control, the commission laid out a set of recommendations. It urged agencies, for example, to:

- assure that officers assigned to patrol inner city neighborhoods have experience, training, and solid supervision;
- prepare for disorders with well-developed plans;
- provide alternatives to lethal weapons for use in riot control and develop guidelines for their use (the commission also called for federally supported research to develop nonlethal weapons);
- offer special training to officers on how to prevent civil disorders; and
- set up mechanisms within the community to address rumors and assist community leaders and citizens in dispelling false rumors that could trigger a riot.¹⁷

In formulating its policing recommendations, the commission leaned heavily on the work of the Johnson Crime

Commission,¹⁸ which had issued its report in 1967.¹⁹ That report’s in-depth treatment of such issues as citizen grievance procedures, for example, proved invaluable to the Kerner staff and commissioners.

One key issue that the Kerner group addressed related to funding and the federal role in supporting change. It was clear to the commission that local governments could not alone bear the burden of supporting reform measures. It therefore called on the federal government to help provide monetary backing.²⁰ This funding, it urged, could support specific initiatives such as community service officers—or, more broadly, suggested improvements in the overall criminal justice system, as the Johnson Commission had also espoused.²¹ While this did not mean local governments should avoid their responsibilities, the Kerner Commissioners said, the importance of the issues involved required a federal commitment.

After 1968—with Richard Nixon’s election and a conservative turn in Washington—the Kerner proposals, especially those calling for Great Society-style federal programs, received scant attention. And in criminal justice, the Johnson Crime Commission recommendations—not Kerner’s—were remembered and turned to over ensuing decades. Yet many of the Kerner proposals on policing have proven remarkably prescient. Their focus on building bridges between police and communities of color, on ensuring fair and impartial treatment of citizens, on addressing use of force and alternatives to arrest, and on promoting less-than-lethal weapons—all of these mirror core issues still facing policing today. Indeed, these were central topics addressed by the White House Task Force on 21st-Century Policing appointed by then-President Obama following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014.²²

The Kerner Commission recommendations may thus provide some guidance for the policing field even half a century later. Both then and now, optimistic proposals for reform were followed by retrenchment.

18 U.S. Government Printing Office. (1967). U.S. president’s commission on law enforcement and administration of criminal justice. The challenge of crime in a free society.

19 The Kerner Report, op.cit., 301.

20 Ibid., p. 335.

21 Ibid., p. 336.

22 Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. (2015). President’s task force on 21st century policing. Final report of the president’s task force on 21st century policing.

14 Ibid., 486.

15 Ibid., 492.

16 Ibid., 492.

17 Ibid., 18.

More recently, an administration in Washington, D.C., that aggressively advanced “Smart on Crime” proposals on policing, sentencing, and corrections²³ has been followed by one focused on violent crime.²⁴ In some ways, this is not unlike the transition from Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society to Nixon’s “law and order” platform. But the similarities may end there, because the criminal justice field—and specifically policing—are very different in 2018 from what they were 50 years ago. Thanks to the legacy of both commissions and the creation of the federal criminal justice assistance program, law enforcement in the United States is far better educated, more professional, and more data-driven than it was in 1968.

Today, while it would be helpful to have leadership from Washington, D.C., there are numerous strong policing leaders across the country pursuing reform work who will continue with or without a “bully pulpit” and targeted funding from the nation’s capital. And while the

23 Obama, B. (2017). The president’s role in advancing criminal justice reform. *Harvard Law Review*, 130(811).

24 Sessions, J. (2017, June 20). Attorney General Jeff Sessions Delivers Remarks at the Opening of the National Summit on Crime Reduction and Public Safety. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-jeff-sessions-delivers-remarks-opening-national-summit-crime-reduction>

current Justice Department is playing a limited role in “pattern or practice” lawsuits challenging police practices, that involvement may continue in cities where federal judges are already engaged. Similarly, many police leaders nationally have vowed to press forward for reforms.²⁵ As one law enforcement leader put it last year, it takes policing years to shift gears, “but once they change, it’s hard to stop that direction.”²⁶

It is clear, however, despite reform efforts now under way and the impressive leadership of many police leaders across America, that much remains to be done. The support of line officers and unions, for example, will be critical to advancing real reform, and achieving culture change will not be easy.²⁷

But we can look back 50 years to the Kerner Commission report to remind ourselves that it set out an ambitious blueprint for the future, one that still remains relevant to the challenges that face us today.

25 Jackman, T. & Berman, M. (2017, April 6). Some in local law enforcement pledge to stick to reform. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <http://www.standard.net/National/2017/04/05/Some-in-local-law-enforcement-pledge-to-stick-to-reform>

26 Ibid.

27 International City Managers Association. Spotlight on police culture—seeing the red flags of organizational cultures gone wrong. (2016, February 27). Retrieved from <https://icma.org/node/18142>

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modified hot spots strategy to try and prevent fatality crashes on rural roadways. Shon Barnes of the Salisbury (North Carolina) Police Department then presented his research on the effects that hot spots policing might have on racial disparities.

Improving Police Crime Prevention and Legitimacy

This panel featured presentations on innovative research designed to inform policing practice and contribute to fairer and more effective policing. Travis Taniguchi of RTI International presented on his work with Elizabeth Groff, from Temple University, on near repeat burglaries and new tools they developed to help agencies understand the value of focusing on reducing near repeats. Cody Telep from Arizona State University described findings from a randomized experiment in Tucson, Arizona, suggesting that a procedural justice training program had intended impacts on officer behavior in crime hot spots. Megan O’Neill from the University of Dundee discussed her work on reforming “stop and search” in Scotland and the role research played in changing Police Scotland policies. Captain Tim Hegarty from the Riley County (Kansas) Police Department described his agency’s adoption of the Evidence-Based Policing Playbook as part of the Matrix Demonstration Project and the crime reduction value of incorporating research-based officer directives into the field.

Practice-Focused Workshops

This year we also featured two practice-focused workshops on law enforcement innovations that combine research with operations. Jeff Beeson of HIDTA presented on the W/B HIDTA’s Overdose Mapping Application (ODMAP), an information technology in use by hundreds of police agencies across the United States to better detect and respond to overdose spikes in communities. Dave Bierie, a criminologist with the U.S. Marshals Service, also brought his team to share with law enforcement the cutting-edge research and analysis the marshals are doing with their available data and in collaboration with university researchers to improve fugitive apprehension. David Mazeika from the College of New Jersey discussed offending by fugitives in the U.S. Bianca Bersani from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, shared her research on foreign-born fugitives. Bierie also presented on the fugitive nexus with lethal violence directed at the police. In future symposia we hope to have more practice-oriented workshops where justice practitioners can learn how to generate and apply research and research innovations to achieve their goals.

Congratulations to all for a successful symposium!

Marking the 50th Anniversary of President Johnson's Crime Commission

BY TED GEST

Ted Gest is the president of Criminal Justice Journalists, Washington bureau chief of the Crime Report, and the founding partner of John Jay College's Center on Media, Crime, and Justice.

Criminal justice in the United States is usually described as a “system,” but in reality, it is not. Unlike a corporation with a chief executive and a chain of command, the criminal justice process involves about 18,000 local police departments, thousands of judges, and a conglomeration of “corrections” agencies that range from probation and parole departments to maximum security prisons.

Components of the justice process have provoked public controversy amid viral videos of recent years, including police officers who killed unarmed suspects, judges who abused defendants, and bail and sentencing laws that filled prisons and jails with more than 2 million inmates, many in poor conditions on any given day. Advocates for crime victims, wrongfully convicted defendants, and others dissatisfied with the justice process have complained loudly.

Remarkably, no formal body has conducted a comprehensive review of criminal justice in more than half a century, when the Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson issued a report in 1967 that made more than 200 recommendations on dealing with a street crime problem that was expanding around the nation. Topics in this report included juvenile crime, policing, courts, prosecution, corrections, sentencing, racial issues in criminal justice, drugs, firearms, domestic violence, crime statistics, science and technology, and prospects for a new commission.

The commission's conclusions are considered a criminal justice landmark in the United States, laying out issues and recommendations that have provided a framework for policy development for more than a half-century. As an example, its most notable single proposal was the one calling for a single telephone number—911—to report emergencies and major crimes. What is not well appreciated is that the LBJ Commission, chaired by Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, was among the first efforts to recognize that the criminal justice process should be recognized as a system, even if that system often did not operate very efficiently. The report also called attention to issues that remained prominent 50 years later, including the need



Ted Gest

for more fundamental academic research and the improvement of the flaws in crime statistics.

The American Society of Criminology (ASC), with a major boost from the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP), made a major effort to address the issue last year. It started with ASC designating the theme of its annual convention, held last fall in Philadelphia, as marking the 50th anniversary of the LBJ Commission. The

society had held single panel discussions relating to the commission in the two previous years. However, with the help of Cynthia Lum, an ASC board member and CEBCP's director, we plotted a more ambitious plan. With the support of the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, we recruited 15 prominent criminologists to conduct a major review of different areas of the criminal justice system covered by the Crime Commission's report. These criminologists included Alfred Blumstein (Carnegie Mellon University), one of the original authors of the 1967 report; Joanne Belknap and Deanne Grant (University of Colorado, Boulder); Philip Cook (Duke University); Robert Crutchfield (University of Washington); April Fernandez (North Carolina State University); Jodi Lane (University of Florida); Doris MacKenzie (Penn State University); Peter Reuter and Bryce Pardo (University of Maryland); Lawrence Sherman (University of Maryland and University of Cambridge); Wesley Skogan (Northwestern University); Cassia Spohn (Arizona State University); Michael Tonry (University of Minnesota); and Paul Wormeli (IJIS Institute).

We asked these experts to do three things: examine what the LBJ Commission recommended in the areas of their expertise; review the developments of the past half-century, both in criminal justice practice and research; and identify what issues a modern-day criminal justice commission should examine. The results were presented in a series of presidential panel discussions at the ASC conference and were published in May in a special issue of the ASC journal *Criminology and Public Policy*. In assigning articles, we concluded that the subjects of race and domestic violence deserved extensive treatment, although they were not discussed at length by the 1960s commission. The report mentions several other major issues that have emerged

since the LBJ Commission's report that would deserve consideration by a new panel, including mental health, crime victims, cybercrime, immigration, white collar crime, and evidence-based crime policy.

Our effort to call attention to the crime commission idea was not limited to publishing the special journal issue. We organized a highly attended briefing on Capitol Hill in April that featured presentations by many of the ASC authors and a talk by Michigan senator Gary Peters, a leading proponent of a new commission. Authors of our volume also made presentations this year to leaders of the National Association of Counties and the National Criminal Justice Association, both of which are organizations that could take part in any modern-day crime commission, whether or not it is formally established by Congress.

In particular, we thought the 50-year anniversary special issue and congressional briefing could serve as a blueprint for a newly appointed commission, whose prospects were not clear in the election year of 2018. A major law enforcement group, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, has been calling for nearly three decades for a new national criminal justice commission. Then-U.S. senator James Webb of Virginia came within three votes in 2011 of winning passage of a law establishing a new commission whose chair would be appointed by the president and whose members would be chosen by congressional leaders of both parties.

A similar, bipartisan plan from Texas senator John Cornyn, South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham, and Senator Gary Peters is pending on Capitol Hill.¹ It is likely to be included in another measure that would reform federal sentencing laws, principally by eliminating many mandatory minimum sentences. As of mid-2018, the sentencing bill was embroiled in a debate between competing proposals. Conservative Republican senators and a majority of the House favor a more modest proposal that would deal mainly with the rehabilitation of federal prisoners. It seemed unlikely that the crime commission would be part of a bill that could clear Congress and be signed by the president during a contentious election year.

In the meantime, some advocates favor the establishment of a new commission that would be dominated by representatives of governors, county commissioners, and mayors who now take leading roles in the criminal justice process. In the *Criminology and Public Policy* special issue, criminologist Alfred Blumstein of Carnegie Mellon University, who was the director of science and technology for the LBJ Commission, notes that organizations such as the National Governors Association could play a major part in a non-federal commission.

¹ See <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/573/text>.

Many groups interested in criminal justice issues have expressed support for a commission. There has been no formal opposition, although some advocates worry that setting up a new commission would have the effect of delaying reform measures at the federal, state, and local levels for which there already is considerable support.

Whatever happens, the review compiled by ASC members will serve as the backdrop for any new effort to aim for comprehensive improvements in the flawed criminal justice process.

*To view the CEBCP Congressional Briefing on the Crime Commission, go to cebcp.org/outreach-symposia-and-briefings/crime-commission. To read all of the articles from the special issue of *Criminology and Public Policy*, go to onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/17459133/2018/17/2.*

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Addressing Juvenile Crime: What Have We Learned, and How Should We Proceed? (JODI LANE)

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The Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy 2018 Recipients

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2018 Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy, Chief James Bueermann and Professor Edmund F. McGarrell. In this feature, we asked both to share their thoughts about their lifelong efforts in evidence-based crime policy.

James Bueermann is the President of the Police Foundation. He was formerly the Chief of the Redlands, California, Police Department.

While I believe there to be more deserving practitioners than myself, I am humbled, and extremely appreciative, of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy's granting me one of its two 2018 Distinguished Achievement Awards. I'd like to congratulate my fellow award winner, Dr. Ed McGarrell, a distinguished researcher and wonderful person to boot!

If I have seen farther in the world of evidence-based policing than expected, it is only because I have stood on the shoulders of giants. These include the men and women of the Redlands Police Department, the Police Foundation, and the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing. They include legends in criminology, criminal justice practice, and community members: David Weisburd, Larry Sherman, Geoff Alpert, Steve Mastrofski, Joan Petersilia, Cynthia Lum, Phil Goff, Raphael Ward, Mark Bush, Lew Nelson, Tom Fitzmaurice, Bob Brickley, Bill Tafoya, Al Gore, Jeremy Travis, Susan Herman, Mark Kroeker, Joe Brann, Ron Davis, Barney Melekian, Luis Alvitrez, Bart Beltran, Gilbert Gil, Enrique Martinez, Anthony Green, and Felix Jones. They have each taught me treasured lessons and helped me discover a wide breadth of perspectives of the world in which I have worked for 40 years. For that, I will always find myself in their debt.

My personal journey into evidence-based practices began in 1966 when I was 10 years old. I had somehow talked my parents into buying me a Red Ryder BB gun and was the envy of my neighborhood cohort. While camping with my family, I decided to engage in one of my earliest experiments.

Like most 10-year-old boys armed with a BB gun, I would shoot at almost anything—sticks, rocks, plants, and birds—without any regard for the harm I caused. During one of my hunting expeditions, I posed the following hypothesis: A living thing shot with my BB gun does not really feel much pain. This obviously served to rationalize my taking shots at any and all things.

To test this hypothesis, I created a methodology that was simple and direct. I would simply shoot myself in my foot to see if it hurt. I reasoned that my Keds tennis shoes would replicate the natural protection small animals had in the way of feathers or scales. This



James Bueermann

research design would give me immediate feedback, which I could use to advance the use of my cherished Red Ryder. It was action research at its finest.

I can report, with scientific certainty, that shooting yourself in the foot with a Red Ryder BB gun does, in fact, really hurt! My hypothesis was disproven.

This experiment taught me two things. First, I had been causing harm to innocent animals without really recognizing that I was

doing so—I never shot at another animal. And second, through experimentation, I could better understand my world and make it a better place.

I realize now that this lesson served to frame how I approached my eventual calling in life. As a young patrol officer in 1980, I conducted research for my master's degree in my department to try and determine if there were differences in the perceptions between line officers and their supervisors about what motivated the officers to work (there were). But I did not really understand the value of policing research to the field and communities at the time. That epiphany hit me in 1998 after reading Professor Larry Sherman's seminal article on the subject, aptly titled "Evidence-Based Policing." I'm very proud of the fact that this is a Police Foundation Ideas in American Policing publication (available at www.policefoundation.org).

From that point onward, I have tried to be a vocal champion of evidence-based policing and all it entails. I believe it is a principled way policing can fulfill three sacred mandates: First, while trying to serve and protect our communities, do no harm (this is policing's version of the Hippocratic Oath); second, use scientific methods to understand and incorporate community perspectives on crime control and police legitimacy; and third, be good stewards of the taxpayer investment in public safety by constantly evaluating the effectiveness of the programs and practices aimed at controlling crime and disorder.

During the 13 years I was the police chief in my department, we conducted multiple randomized controlled trials. These were invaluable to our agency and caused us to alter our way of doing business.

I believe it is incumbent upon researchers, practitioners, and community members to help advance our collective understanding of the



CEBCP's Charlotte Gill, David Weisburd, Laurie O. Robinson, and the 2018 award winners, Ed McGarrell and Jim Bueermann.

complicated world of policing. In addition to the topics already on policing's radar screen, we must focus on disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence, facial recognition, predictive analytics, and virtual reality. We must better understand the way in which social media informs the public's perception of crime control, race, and police use of force. We need to help the police own evidence-based principles and anchor them to the culture of policing. And finally, research should help the police and policymakers better understand the unintended consequences of well-intended strategies to control crime and disorder that ultimately inflict harm on the very people the police are paid to protect.

As our world continues to change at an ever-increasing rate, the use of the best available evidence to drive public safety policy and practice, and the persistent evaluation of those practices to gauge their effectiveness and potential for harm, must become a fundamental underpinning of our quest to enhance the public's trust and confidence in the police.



Edmund F. McGarrell

Edmund F. McGarrell is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University. He is director of the Michigan Justice Statistics Center.

One of the most important developments in criminology and criminal justice has been the move toward evidence-based and evidence-informed policy and practice. These were terms I do

not recall hearing as a graduate student and cannot really pinpoint when they started being used regularly in our field. Clearly, the work of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy has been central to developing the research base of evidence-based crime policy and for cementing these concepts among criminal justice professionals, policymakers, and researchers. It is particularly humbling to accept this award given the esteem I have for the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy.

It is also particularly rewarding to receive the award from center fellow Laurie O. Robinson. As assistant attorney general leading the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Laurie was integral in supporting the development of evidence-based crime policy and translational criminology. In her role as professor at George Mason University and with the center, she embodies the integration of practice and research.

Speaking of OJP, I want to express my sincere appreciation to the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The support of these agencies, to both the worlds of practice and of research, has been critical for developing researcher-practitioner collaboration and for the evidence base that has largely developed over the last few decades. Whatever contributions I have made have been possible because of the support from BJA, BJS, and NIJ.

A Personal Journey to Translational Research and Evidence-Based Practice

Like many new academic criminologists, my "pre-tenure" focus was on developing my own set of research questions, conducting research, and producing articles largely of interest to a specialized group of

scholars. Although [I was] always interested in how this research connected to practice, in reality there was a significant gap between these research products and the world of practice.

My commitment to evidence-based policy and the translation of research to practice emerged due to unforeseen opportunities that arose through collaboration with the Spokane (Washington) Police Department. This was in the early days of community and problem-oriented policing. To the credit of former chief Terry Mangan and his command staff, the department came to the university asking for assistance in understanding the perceptions of both the citizens they were serving, as well as the personnel within the police department. Among a variety of research activities, we conducted surveys in both the community and the department.

As I did a little bit of background research, one of the things that struck me was the consistent finding that a key source of motivation for most police officers was the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of the community they serve (Lord and Friday, 2003; White et al., 2010).

The second experience during this same period was an outgrowth of my first NIJ grant. This was a study of crime in a relatively small public housing complex in Spokane. This was a facility that served primarily elderly and disabled people. Here, a data collection activity became an eye-opening experience as I spent time talking with residents in their apartments. The consistent theme was that while they very much appreciated their apartments and their friends and neighbors that lived within their self-contained facility, they were afraid to leave the complex. I would leave those meetings feeling depressed that people had to live in these conditions that Wes Skogan later described as the crime-disorder-fear cycle (Skogan, 1990).

The good news was that a collaborative, place-based, problem-solving effort had measurable impacts on crime, disorder, and fear, and the residents expressed improved quality of life, reduced fear, and great appreciation for the police (McGarrell et al., 1999).

Since that time, I have been fortunate to work collaboratively with police, prosecutors, probation and parole officers, and community partners in a number of communities. Consistently, I am impressed with the commitment of the police and other criminal justice actors to public safety and the health of the communities they serve. Similarly, I see community members who are committed to the well-being of their communities. Indeed, in cities like Detroit and Flint, Michigan, that have experienced years of economic disinvestment, I am continually struck by the resiliency of both the criminal justice practitioners and community members with whom I am privileged to work.

The Rewards of Translational Criminology

It is to this intersection of the sense of public service among criminal justice practitioners with the commitment of local residents to their communities, that the work of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy makes such important contributions. Whether it is producing evidence, helping our partners link to evidence-based and evidence-informed policy, or working collaboratively in researcher-practitioner partnerships, we researchers can support the commitment to public safety and community revitalization found among our criminal justice and community partners. In doing so, there is also the satisfaction of knowing our research may also contribute to public safety and justice. Of course, as people like David Weisburd, Charlotte Gill, Chris Koper, Cynthia Lum, and their colleagues at the center have shown, it can also lead to research of great impact.

With respect to this much appreciated award, I also want to thank my family, as well as my mentors, colleagues, and students with whom I have been able to work. Our collaboration has strengthened my scholarship and certainly enriched my life. Finally, I want to thank the numerous criminal justice partners who have allowed me to come into their worlds and make the connection between research and practice. Your professionalism and dedication are an inspiration.

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2018 Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame Inductees

The Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) inducted two new members this year into the Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame. They are Sergeant Jeffery Egge of the Minneapolis (Minnesota) Police Department and Detective Inspector Michael Newman of the Queensland (Australia) Police Service. The Hall of Fame recognizes innovative law enforcement practitioners who have been central to the implementation of a high-quality research program in their agency and who also are relentless champions of institutionalizing evidence-based practices. Each inductee contributes a statement in the hall as a learning and teaching opportunity for others to gain ideas from. We highlight those statements here.



Jeffery Egge

Statement from Sergeant Jeffery Egge

This is an important recognition for practitioners in our field, and I want to thank the CEBCP and Drs. Koper, Lum, and Weisburd.

If leadership is the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, then studies, experiments, and assessments are the foundation for improving the organization and accomplishing

the mission.

Starting out in private security exposed me to extensive uses of data to work better, focus, and achieve measurable results. Being a part of CompStat, from its inception in Minneapolis, as a deployed police resource, an intelligence gatherer, tactical leader, and analyst, I was able to determine how the components could work better together. In the 18 years since we started using a data-driven approach in Minneapolis, the overall crime reduction throughout the city has been 36.72 percent.

Starting with my collaborations with the Police Executive Research Forum, where I served as a research fellow, I was given an opportunity to bring my agency back to its roots in the 1980s as a laboratory for research. I saw the need and benefits of research translation and embraced the Matrix Demonstration Project here at the CEBCP. And now as an NIJ LEADS [National Institute of Justice Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science] scholar, among so many young, talented, and smart police practitioners advancing data and science, I'm fortunate to have a seat at the table as we challenge outdated, conventional policing paradigms with data-driven solutions and practices.

Amid the daily chaos of calls, crimes, and conflict, it is critical for police leadership to have a solid foundation of factual knowledge from systematic truth. As a profession, we are still mired in individual inci-

dents and events. From top to bottom, the tendency to handle one 911 call after another prevails. Research has been easily discarded because it's too complex and time-consuming. But we should never lose sight of the bigger picture and what we can build and achieve with data and science.

When practitioners are given an opportunity to focus on policing problems through the lens of science, it can foster an aptitude for making further discoveries and innovations. When research and evaluation are relevant to the agency mission, the work benefits from greater urgency, mandate, integration, and sustainability within the agency. Crime analysis plays an integral part. In collaboration with some of the leading criminologists of the day, for example, we learned that roughly 8 percent of all city blocks in Minneapolis accounted for about two-thirds, or 64 percent, of the city's shootings, reinforcing our belief in and informing our strategies for a more proactive, place-based, problem-solving focus.

The transformational aspects of research are sometimes short-lived in a police organization. But when sworn police and civilian employees have personal ownership and involvement in studies, experiments, and assessments, it improves their skills and abilities to carry forward and transform the culture in their organizations through changes in policing leadership and societal norms.

For the better part of 30 years, I have believed that the best way to make progress in my profession is from within. I have had the pleasure of working with colleagues strongly dedicated to this pursuit from the CEBCP and PERF [Police Executive Research Program], as well as NIJ LEADS scholars, crime analysts, and criminologists from across the world. Their efforts inspired me to pursue evidence-based policing with a passion for improving police efficiency and advancing public safety.

I've dedicated my life's work toward crime fighting and discovered the value of data, science, and research translation in improving police initiatives and strategies. However, this recognition came as a surprise



CEBCP's Cynthia Lum (left) and Christopher Koper (right) with 2018 inductees Jeffery Egge and Michael Newman (middle).

and is humbling and motivating. It would not have been possible without the hard work of the sworn and civilian employees of the Minneapolis Police Department. I want to thank the chiefs I have worked for: Robert K. Olson, who hired and promoted me, Tim Dolan, Janee Harteau, and Medaria Arradondo and Mayor Betsy Hodges have all supported, recognized, and encouraged the work of my team over the years.



Michael Newman

Statement from Detective Inspector
Michael Newman

During my 26-year policing career I have served in a variety of roles, both operational and corporate. In each application for promotion, I provided examples and “evidence” of how the different strategies I had used had led to a reduction in crime. At the time, and in my naïveté, I did not realize how unlikely my “evidence” was actually linked to meaningful crime reduction. Yet, after a chance opportunity to get involved in an evidence-based policing (EBP) project more than six years ago, I have changed my entire approach to policing, challenging myself to move beyond poor quality evaluations and incorporate more rigor into assessing whether or not our policing strategies actually reduce crime and harm.

My first exposure to this was as the project manager for the Mobile

Police Community Office (MPCO) Project, where as a practitioner, I was involved with researchers from the University of Queensland (UQ). This partnership provided me with critical insight into the design and methodology required by researchers to rigorously evaluate a strategy. It further provided me the opportunity to highlight the operational needs specific to our agency. This partnership approach proved to be highly successful in commencing EBP projects while I was the Evidence-Based Policing Visiting Fellow at the University of Queensland in 2016-17. The results from this experiment led to the purchase of a second MPCO, and both vehicles are regularly used throughout Brisbane, Australia.

To develop the evidence, we need to “upskill” our people. To this end, I coordinated for the delivery of 10 EBP workshops, in conjunction with the University of Queensland, that are designed to facilitate the promulgation of EBP across the various regions and commands within the Queensland Police Service (QPS). As a result of promoting these workshops to the executive leadership team, interest was generated for a further eight workshops to be conducted by June 2018. These workshops run for around three hours and can cater up to 30 people at a time. The participants get exposure to EBP and are given an understanding of its importance, shown how and where they can access this evidence (other than just a Google search), given examples of where the QPS has undertaken EBP projects, and given the opportunity, as a table group, to identify an issue that is relevant to them and develop an intervention that can be rigorously evaluated and added to the evidence base. In short, by exposing participants to these initial concepts, these workshops seek to foster the capacity for in-house evaluations into the future. Through these workshops and

my role at UQ, I became a broker for advanced EBP within the QPS.

In my role as the EBP broker, I have been well positioned to identify, support, mentor, and promote the development of EBP projects that support QPS strategic objectives. Further to this, as the EBP Visiting Fellow and also a facilitator in the EBP workshops, I was able to identify robust EBP projects, codevelop the design and methodology, negotiate with key stakeholders within the QPS and academia, and support and mentor the officers to enable the projects to come to fruition. I was also able to generate interest in research topics to assist undergraduate students, provide them with an opportunity to work with police, and research topics of immediate interest to police with the ability to be immediately translated into policy.

This approach has led to a number of EBP trials being undertaken within the QPS on a variety of topics, including

- reducing drug supply in inner-city hotel accommodation providers;
- applying a new approach to the delivery of detective training;
- promoting investigative best practice into adult sexual assault complaints;
- exploring the impact of a scripted crime message during a standard random breath test to determine if the process could reduce victimization;
- testing whether a procedurally just conversation with a senior police officer can influence future offender behavior;
- enhancing gender diversity in QPS recruiting;
- examining public perception of police uniforms; and
- evaluating a mental health co-responder model.

The visiting fellow role at UQ further provided me the opportunity to broker experiments and work collaboratively with researchers in a range of areas, such as:

- examining the level to which EBP has penetrated and been accepted in the QPS and Western Australian Police (WAPol);

- developing and delivering three one-day procedural justice training workshops for the Royal Thai Police on behalf of the Global Road Safety Partnership;
- contributing to reports and papers;
- assisting PhD students and networking them with appropriate contacts within the QPS; and
- revisiting the original analysis of the MPCO and developing the Queensland Crime Impact Score (QCIS) to examine the results from a different perspective.

I believe that by combining our police experience (or our craft) with the use of valid scientific methods, we can foster innovation and professionalism in policing.

The appetite for practitioner-led policing research is high. A number of societies of evidence-based policing have been formed around the world, starting with the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, the United States, and Spain. The mission of these societies is to develop, disseminate, and advocate for police to use scientific research to guide best practices in all aspects of policing. They are collectives of individuals mutually committed to evidence-based policing. They have been created to advocate for and support research and to promulgate new knowledge. Membership, numbering in the thousands, primarily comprises police officers. Perhaps this level of uptake further demonstrates the desire of police officers to embrace research and question historical practice. It also is an attempt by police officers and their respective agencies to take ownership of the profession of policing or the science of the profession.

For more information about all of the inductees in the Hall of Fame, visit cebcp.org/hall-of-fame.

Utilizing Data continued from page 13

ation of the intervention. Although we are just over halfway through the first year of the project, and data has not yet been analyzed in the aggregate, there are strong early indicators that the intervention is having success. Officers have been willing to try a new approach and have successfully completed almost 5,000 extra visits to these locations in the first half of 2018. It is hoped that a long-term

evaluation will show this effort can not only make a difference in fatality crashes, but also be an example of research-practitioner teams working together to address problems in rural communities. I also hope that this work empowers others to think creatively about how science and data can be applied to their specific concerns and to better law enforcement as a whole.

Translating Science in Film: The Science & Entertainment Exchange of the National Academy of Sciences

BY ANN MERCHANT AND ANA SALCEDA

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The Science & Entertainment Exchange (The Exchange), a program of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), connects entertainment industry professionals with top scientists to create a synergy between realistic science and engaging entertainment. The Exchange's parent organization, the NAS, was chartered by Congress in 1863 under an act signed by Abraham Lincoln to provide crucial scientific advice to the nation. As a private, nonprofit institution and the most prestigious honorific science academy in the United States, the NAS is privileged to draw on the expertise of thousands of scientists and engineers.

Leveraging this wealth of expertise to facilitate conversations with content creators will enable those creators to catalyze more storytelling grounded in authentic science; encourage a richer, more diverse depiction of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) characters in order to challenge traditional stereotypes; and inspire new media projects driven by science and engineering themes. By using the vehicle of popular entertainment media to deliver sometimes subtle, but nevertheless powerful, messages to downstream audiences, scientists have access to translational tools to communicate key messages and express their passion for science.

The Exchange achieves this synergy in a number of ways. In addition to its regular events programming, funding from Howard Hughes Medical Institute and Science Sandbox—an initiative of the Simons Foundation—allow The Exchange to host weekend retreats for its stakeholders. These retreats typically cover 12 to 15 different topics in science and engineering (including a focus on crime and justice at the 2017 Documentary Filmmakers Retreat),¹ providing a treasure trove of science inspiration for the filmmakers and, simultaneously, essential insights for scientists to think differently about how to communicate their work.

The retreat agenda is both full and interactive. It is purposefully composed to ensure that participants quickly get to know one another and immediately begin to collaborate. There is equal emphasis on the



purely social dynamic and the storytelling activities that are directed and workshopped. Much of the agenda is devoted to 14-minute presentations made by the science and engineering professionals. This provides the filmmakers with a specific window into the world of science with which they are generally unfamiliar.

Presentations are punctuated by panel discussions that bring the filmmakers together to discuss specific challenges in telling complex stories that will engage audiences. Both the formal and informal segments of the agenda are meant to generate a sense of community that builds over the course of the retreat weekend. The final collaborative opportunity is relatively free-form and provides filmmakers a chance to make “appointments” with three of the scientists to engage more deeply on an individual basis in order to review specific questions they may have.

The retreats began as a way to connect members of the creative community who focus primarily on narrative (fictional) dramas that appear in film and television. The first Exchange retreat was for writers and took place in 2014. Four additional retreats followed for this same cohort of entertainment industry professionals. Because the retreat model proved to be especially successful in creating a special kind of synergy that produced meaningful interaction and resulted in connections that yielded impact, The Exchange believed that it was important to apply the format to other groups from the entertainment industry. Given that we are experiencing a golden age of documentary film, it seemed appropriate to apply the retreat model to documentarians.² Once a quiet, niche market of content appealing to a narrow audience, documentaries now represent a lively abundance of topics that are regularly binge-watched on streaming services and appeal to a diverse set of audiences. Accordingly, in September 2016, The Exchange convened its first retreat for documentary filmmakers, casting a wide net to bring together 15 filmmakers, many of whom

¹ Cynthia Lum, director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, represented criminology this past year.

² See www.theguardian.com/film/2016/nov/14/golden-age-of-documentaries-michael-moore-amy-making-a-murderer.

had not previously focused on science as a source of inspiration.

Building on the success of that initial engagement, The Exchange reconvened in October 2017, bringing a new group of scientists and documentarians together at the NAS facility in Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Again, The Exchange invited a number of filmmakers who had not previously sought inspiration in STEM. Rather than preach to the choir, the goal was to influence talented filmmakers who were new to science. Indeed, the retreat may have been the first time that many of the filmmakers spent any amount of time with a scientist or engineer.

While the science to which they were exposed was clearly important to the agenda, the general interaction between scientists and filmmakers was a critical feature of the retreat. Indeed, 90 percent of the respondents characterized the 2017 retreat as a “fantastic experience” that they would be “eager to repeat.” One participant summarized a mutual feeling between scientists and filmmakers alike, saying “Kapow to the brain—new ideas, new ways of thinking and expressing, new collaborations. Who knew?”

Reflections from Ana Salceda, filmmaker and participant in The Exchange retreats

The traditional relationship between documentary filmmakers and scientists is one where the latter serves as a source of information and corroboration for the stories that filmmakers, producers, and broadcasters want to tell. This relationship is somewhat lopsided and unfolds in a ratings-driven media landscape focused on transmitting content 24/7 and keeping the gears of social media platforms well-greased. It’s not an environment that is always conducive for thoughtful exchange. Despite the best intentions of an industry of creative people who want to make a difference, the editorial scales are too often tipped away from quality and toward volume, and the need to attract big audiences can carry the day.

The Exchange retreats create opportunities for filmmakers and scientists to work together as true collaborators. They provide the time and space for the exchange of ideas so that both filmmakers and scientists can discuss such issues as what topics are important to them and why; their views on what makes a good story; ethics in storytelling; innovative ways to communicate; and the challenges both groups face among their institutional peers—among other topics. Simply put, both groups have the opportunity to get to know each other in ways that otherwise wouldn’t happen. Furthermore, the facilitators of the retreat constantly push participants out of their comfort zones and challenge them to think differently through creative exercises, such as role-reversal and speed pitching. These and other activities break down barriers, establish common ground, and unite filmmakers and scientists as members of the same team. In many ways, filmmakers and scientists are kindred spirits, members of the same tribe who were long ago separated and can find each other through The Exchange.

As a journalist, I’ve always been interested in taking the time to tell

complex, interdisciplinary stories. However, over the years, my work in the industry has limited my capacity to do what comes naturally to me. The Exchange in general, and the retreat in particular, encouraged me to go back to my roots and dare to tell richer and more complex stories. But perhaps what is more significant is that the retreat challenged me to reconsider the nuts-and-bolts and the infrastructure that I put in place to do my work.

For example, my primary partner in my current project is a scientist, William Heyman, PhD. His life’s work focuses on the mysteries behind fish spawning aggregations sites (FSAs), and his 30-year crusade to protect them in the Wider Caribbean Region is my source of inspiration. Will and I have spent countless hours working together. We’ve discussed the relevance of our story to other scientists, to stakeholders in the regions (such as fishermen and conservation organizations), and to the general public.

As a result of our collaboration, our project—called *Big Fish*—has grown because we recognized the relevance of the story to different audiences, and that, by working together, we can have a greater impact through our work. Yes, we are developing a documentary film for a broad audience, but we are also developing communication tools that will unite scientists from six countries who are working toward common goals but who didn’t recognize they were part of one story.

Through our work we are producing storytelling products to attract citizen scientists and grow a constituency for FSAs, and we are telling our story to policy experts with the hope of protecting FSAs as scientists, fishermen, and everyday citizens race to study them. The scientist-documentarian collaboration also makes *Big Fish* more than just a documentary; the project is multidisciplinary, covering scientific fields such as oceanography, marine biology, zoology, economics, social science, fisheries, and conservation management.

With an impressive network of collaborators, The Exchange opened a window of infinite possibilities for me. It also changed my conceptualization of what makes for a successful project: to tell stories that not only serve the general public, but also the needs of scientists, local communities, and the organizations focused on science-based policy. It’s both top-down and bottom-up storytelling. In addition to the way that I now approach my projects in terms of content, structure, and partnerships, The Exchange has provided something else: a community of people who share my interests and a network that I can rely on.

Thanks in part to the restless energy of the film community and the proliferation of platforms, we’re witnessing an unprecedented diversification of audiences, and the public is more receptive than ever to watching documentaries. Broadcasters, too, are looking for more sophisticated programming. The Exchange is a catalyst, helping to push the evolution of documentary film by creating a burgeoning network of filmmakers, scientists, media experts, and funders that share the goal of telling complex, fascinating stories that engage and enlighten a growing audience. The Exchange is ahead of the curve.

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Proactive Policing's Effects on Crime and Communities

BY DAVID WEISBURD AND MALAY K. MAJMUNDAR

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Proactive policing emerged in the 1980s as a reaction to concerns about crime control and relations between the police and the community. It differed in approach from the standard models of policing in its focus on being proactive rather than reactive in dealing with the problems that police must address. Proactive policing strategies are widely used across the landscape of American policing.

The United States is currently facing another period of public concern about the behaviors of police. Instances of perceived or actual police misconduct have given rise to nationwide protests against unfair and abusive police practices. Because of this, it is not enough to examine the impacts of proactive policing on crime and disorder. Consideration also must be given to the impacts of proactive policing on community perceptions of the police, the legality of policing, potential abuses of police authority, and the equitable application of police services in the everyday lives of citizens.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's Committee on Law and Justice was tasked by the National Institute of Justice and the Laura and John Arnold Foundation with assessing the application and results of specific proactive policing strategies. The study committee of sociologists, criminologists, legal scholars, economists, statisticians, psychologists, and law enforcement professionals examined the strategies' impacts on crime, whether they are being used in a legal fashion, whether they are applied in a discriminatory manner, and the reactions of communities.

The committee defined proactive policing as "all policing strategies that have as one of their goals the prevention or reduction of crime and disorder, and that are not reactive in terms of focusing primarily on uncovering ongoing crime or on investigating or responding to crimes once they have occurred." The committee report focused on organizational strategies, not decisions of individual officers.

Examining Approaches to Proactive Policing

The committee found evidence that a number of proactive policing practices are having an impact on reducing crime and disorder, at least in the short term, and most of the strategies implemented do not harm communities' attitudes toward police. Over the past two decades,



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proactive policing has taken a number of different forms that often overlap in practice. The report focuses on the following four broad approaches to proactive policing: place-based, problem-solving, person-focused, and community-based interventions.

Place-based strategies capitalize on the growing research base that shows that crime is concentrated at specific micro-geographic places within a city, such as street segments or clusters of street segments. These strategies seek to utilize policing resources more efficiently to reduce crime. This approach includes

- Hot spots policing—a practice where police focus on locations where crime is concentrated—produces crime reduction effects without simply displacing crime into surrounding areas. Indeed, the evidence available suggests that nearby areas also experience crime reductions (often termed "diffusion of benefits").
- Predictive policing uses sophisticated computer algorithms to predict changing patterns of future crime, but there is insufficient evidence to support a firm conclusion for or against the efficacy of crime-prediction software or associated police response tactics.
- Closed circuit television (CCTV) is thought to create a general deterrent effect on crime by increasing an offender's perceived risk of being identified or apprehended for criminal activity. Studies examining the use of CCTV are mixed but tend to show modest outcomes in terms of reducing property crime at high-crime locations. For proactive uses of CCTV, there are insufficient studies to draw conclusions about their impact on crime and disorder.

Problem-solving strategies focus on identifying the underlying problems that produce crime and disorder incidents. Approaches include

- Problem-oriented policing seeks to identify and analyze the underlying causes of crime problems and respond using a wide variety of methods and tactics, from improving lighting and repairing fences to cleaning up parks and improving recreational opportunities for youth. While this strategy has been popular, there are surprisingly

few rigorous program evaluations of it. Nonetheless, a small group of strongly designed studies show these programs lead to reductions in crime.

- In third-party policing, police seek to persuade or coerce property owners, business owners, public housing agencies, and other private entities to take some responsibilities for preventing crime or reducing crime problems. The limited available evidence supports a conclusion that third-party policing generates reductions in crime and disorder.

Person-focused strategies focus police efforts on the small number of offenders who account for a large proportion of crime.

Approaches include

- Focused deterrence programs, which attempt to deter crime among high-rate violent offenders, show consistent crime control impacts in reducing gang violence, street crime driven by disorderly drug markets, and repeat individual offenders. These efforts have both short- and long-term area-wide impacts on crime.
- Stop, question, and frisk (SQF)—stops in which suspects are questioned about their activities, frisked, and often searched—showed mixed results when implemented as a general, citywide crime control strategy. Evaluations of focused uses of SQF targeting places with violence or serious gun crimes and focusing on high-risk repeat offenders consistently find crime reduction effects.

Community-based strategies try to address and mitigate community problems by enlisting and mobilizing the community in the prevention of crime and disorder. Approaches include

- Broken windows policing—a strategy to address minor instances of disorder before they overwhelm a neighborhood and to restore afflicted neighborhoods—generated little or no impact on crime when applied broadly as an aggressive tactic for increasing misdemeanor arrests. On the other hand, interventions that use place-based, problem-solving practices to reduce social and physical disorder show crime reduction impacts.
- Procedural justice policing seeks to impress upon citizens and the wider community that the police exercise their authority in legitimate ways, with the expectation that if citizens accord legitimacy to police activity, they are more inclined to collaborate with police and abide by laws. There are a small group of studies with inconsistent outcomes. The committee did not draw conclusions about the effectiveness of such strategies.
- Community-oriented policing involves citizens in identifying and addressing public safety concerns, decentralizes decision-making to develop responses to those concerns, and works to solve them. The existing studies do not identify a consistent crime-prevention benefit for these programs.

Legal Implications and Considerations

However effective a policing practice may be in preventing crime, it is impermissible if it violates the law. In turn, even when proactive

strategies do not lead to constitutional violations, they may undermine important legal values such as privacy, equality, and accountability. The most important legal constraints on proactive policing are the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and related statutory provisions. Although proactive policing strategies do not inherently violate the Fourth Amendment, which protects against unreasonable search and seizure, proactive strategies could lead to violations.

SQF and “zero tolerance” versions of broken windows policing have been linked to violations of both the Fourth Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause by courts in private litigation and by the U.S. Department of Justice in its investigations of police departments. The committee found that there is limited direct empirical evidence on the relationship between particular policing strategies and constitutional violations.

Racial Bias and Disparities in Proactive Policing

There are likely to be large racial disparities in the volume and nature of police-citizen encounters in proactive policing. Existing evidence does not establish conclusively whether and to what extent such racial disparities are indicators of statistical prediction, racial animus, implicit bias, or other causes.

Research is urgently needed on racial bias in proactive policing. At present, police departments and communities lack the evidence base to help them make informed decisions to better align behaviors with values of equity and justice. More research on these topics is needed to better understand the potential negative consequences of proactive policing. The committee found the lack of data on the possible role of racial bias in proactive policing particularly troubling.

Community Impacts

The importance of positive community relationships with the police are broadly recognized, and the committee believed that it was critical to assess the impacts of proactive policing on outcomes such as fear of crime, collective efficacy, and community evaluations of police and police legitimacy.

Emerging research suggests that while place-based proactive policing strategies rarely have negative impacts on community outcomes, such strategies rarely improve community perceptions of the police.

The committee could not identify credible studies of overall negative or positive outcomes of person-focused strategies on communities. However, there are a number of studies of citizens’ personal experiences with SQFs and aggressive zero tolerance tactics that show marked negative associations between these strategies and individual health and mental health outcomes.

Studies on problem-solving interventions show consistent small-to-moderate positive impacts on community satisfaction with the police. Community-oriented policing also leads to modest improvements in the public’s view of policing and the police.

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BetaGov Supports Practitioners and Evaluators in Conducting Randomized Control Trials to Test Criminal Justice Programs

BY JUSTIN ESCAMILLA, JESSICA REICHERT, MAUREEN HILLHOUSE, AND ANGELA HAWKEN

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Many fields employ researchers and others who routinely conduct experiments using randomized control trials (RCTs) to test daily operations to learn about and improve their work to increase success. However, fields in the public sector, including criminal justice, have lagged in experimentation. Testing is pervasive in medicine, marketing, and business as part of the standard process for decision-making and advancement. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos said his company's success is "a function of how many experiments [they] do per year, per month, per week, per day" (Simmons, 2017). Medicine, marketing, and business leaders recognize how rare it is to get it right the first time, and they embrace failure as a learning opportunity (Edmondson, 2011). In the public sector, ethical concerns, practicality, and a lack of knowledge are some of the barriers to the use of RCTs (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2001).

Most public policies and practices—such as how we educate our children, deliver health care, rehabilitate convicted offenders, or house the homeless—have one thing in common: They have never been empirically tested. Conducting rigorous evaluation traditionally involves academic researchers and government funding and requires navigating through bureaucratic red tape that makes the research difficult to accomplish. As a result, many commonplace policies intended to make citizens smarter, safer, or healthier are based more on public perception or "business as usual" than on empirical data.

Randomized Control Trials: Why Are They Important?

Randomized control trials are the scientific gold standard for program evaluation. Evaluators employ RCTs to measure program effectiveness by isolating the effects of programmatic conditions from other factors that may contribute to varying outcomes among similar groups, such as systematic bias in program participation (Shadish et al., 2001). RCTs can help ensure government policies are effective and will help those who need them most (Buck & McGee, 2015). Programs that



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undergo RCT-based evaluations also become more attractive to grant-makers and investors who value scientific evidence. Robust and stable funding streams enable program adoption, expansion, and long-term improvements.

What Is BetaGov?

BetaGov is a multidisciplinary group of academic and practice-experienced researchers who help agencies explore possible improvements in policies and practices in domains ranging from criminal justice to education. BetaGov's approach is unconventional by design; BetaGov exists because conventional approaches to conceptualizing and conducting research to test policies and practices can be inefficient, and the results are often irrelevant to real-world practitioners and policymakers. BetaGov was created to promote scientific evaluations of policies and practices via RCTs and to make these assessments the norm rather than the exception. BetaGov's mission is to help agencies, policymakers, and others develop, conduct, analyze, and share research on policies and practices that affect the public they serve. Guidance from BetaGov—provided at no cost to the end user—facilitates design and implementation of research conducted by service agencies and

departments at all government levels. The goal is to significantly increase the pace of learning about policies pertaining to health services, social services, criminal justice, education, and other domains; identify promising innovations; and identify policies and practices that are inefficient or ineffective.

With BetaGov's guidance and assistance, practitioners can carry out their own RCTs. Being able to design and implement a trial without funding and often without regulatory hurdles means that the trial can be more quickly conducted and completed. The private sector has long relied on simple, pragmatic RCTs to improve efficiency and performance; BetaGov promotes the use of these same techniques to inform policy solutions for the most challenging health and social problems.

A BetaGov Collaboration Example: Randomized Control Trial of an Illinois Reentry Program

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA) is a state government agency that administers federal criminal justice grants and serves as the state's Statistical Analysis Center for criminal justice research. Researchers from ICJIA were recruited to evaluate a newly established 2018 prisoner reentry program in Illinois. The program, Pathway to Enterprise for Returning Citizens (PERC), offers entrepreneurship training to individuals returning to Cook County, Illinois, communities from prison. The training focuses on how to start a business, offers a mentor for support, and provides an opportunity to obtain a small business loan. There is very little research on prior entrepreneurship reentry programs and none employing an RCT design.

The ICJIA researchers were tasked with measuring program benefits. They sought to collect program process information¹ and use an RCT to compare program outcomes, such as securing employment, reducing recidivism (arrest and reincarceration), and starting a business. As a government agency with research experience but few prior opportunities to apply an RCT, ICJIA partnered with BetaGov for assistance. BetaGov and ICJIA researchers scheduled regular conference calls to discuss evaluation components and RCT implementation. The team stratified applicants by prison release date and distance from PERC training agencies, and BetaGov completed the random assignment of program applicants into either the treatment group (PERC-trained) or the control condition (on parole with no PERC training). With BetaGov's help, ICJIA researchers saved time while avoiding the appearance of possible bias in participant selection.

Lessons Learned from Our Randomized Control Trial

Practitioners Should View Evaluation as a Valuable Tool

To seasoned practitioners with years of field experience, a formal evaluation guided by researchers may seem irrelevant. After all, most programs make adjustments over the course of development, and changes on the ground are easily recognized. However, even the sharpest practitioners may not recognize that complex external factors

unrelated to programmatic decisions may be driving observable changes. The scientific method employed by RCTs can most effectively rule out external factors as the explanation for ground-level changes, which makes an RCT evaluation an efficient and accurate way to discover whether program activities achieve the desired outcomes. Accordingly, it saves time and resources otherwise spent on ineffective and unproven modifications.

Of course, researchers must acknowledge that practitioners often have more immediate needs. Short-term feedback, interim reports, program updates, and troubleshooting may be required long before the formal evaluation is completed. Researchers should confer with practitioners on their needs to see what can be immediately addressed and clearly communicate the project scope to manage expectations. The development of methodology, data collection, and other activities required by rigorous evaluation may take longer than what is naturally learned throughout normal operations. However, knowledge gained through an RCT evaluation will be based on empirically derived data and useful in the long-term.

Examine a Program's Mission and Goals

For an evaluation to be a truly collaborative endeavor, the mission of a program must be reflected in the evaluation design and in the outcomes to be measured. Goals of funders, program leadership, staff, and other core stakeholders must be aligned and sufficiently understood to ensure meaningful research questions and valuable results. Establishing clear goals can be difficult for new programs and for programs lacking consistent direction from leaders, but an evaluation can be a great opportunity to define new goals or get reacquainted with original program goals. Researchers can help construct operational definitions to accurately measure the concepts most meaningful to program stakeholders.

Creating a logic model that maps how stakeholders are connected to program activities and how those activities are connected to main goals is a great way to align program partners. An honest, open-minded discussion about the feasibility of the program model should take place. If the purpose and scope of a program or its evaluation is not clear to key stakeholders before the evaluation begins, more organization and collaboration is needed. In the end, practitioners and researchers should be able to provide similar answers to the questions: "What does the program hope to achieve?" and "How will you know if that has been achieved?"

Know How to Address Ethical Concerns and Design Issues

An RCT can be derailed by data collection barriers, mid-program adjustments, scheduling, and study participant retention issues. A plan should be in place to deal with these issues as they arise. However, sometimes the very nature of an RCT can be problematic. Some stakeholders may have concerns about randomly excluding people from a program meant to be helpful. However, assigning people to not receive a beneficial treatment or intervention can be acceptable under the right circumstances. No one sets out to create an ineffective program, let alone one that produces unintended negative consequences for its participants. Good intentions, however, do not make good programs.

¹ Data included intake data, pre-tests and post-tests, exit surveys, mentor surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Program staff need to be open to the idea that their programs as currently administered may be ineffective, inefficient, or unhelpful, especially when their program is new or untested. The purpose of a rigorous evaluation is to determine whether a program does what it aims to do so that participants benefit as intended.

Researchers must keep the principles of ethical research in focus at all times and understand that scientific research has not always embodied these principles in the past (Mandal, Acharya, & Parija, 2011; “The Belmont Report,” 1979). Collaboration on RCTs will work best when researchers directly address practitioner concerns and can offer practical solutions to issues with random assignment when possible, including assigning from a waitlist or providing alternate programming over no programming (Shadish et al., 2001). Finally, researchers should recognize when the logistics and context of a project are simply not conducive to an RCT, such as when quick results are paramount, precision or causal inference are not desired, proper planning is impossible, or if an RCT would introduce too many complications for a budding program to handle (Shadish et al., 2001).

Be Resilient and Continue to Advocate for RCTs in Criminal Justice

Not every part of an RCT evaluation will go smoothly, but when researchers are committed to a solid evaluation plan, adjustments can be made to account for arising issues. This can be easier with the assistance of BetaGov and other associations whose expertise and experiences allow them to help solve evaluation problems associated with unexpected events, strained resources, and knowledge gaps. With supportive services that speak the

language of both practice and research, researchers should feel encouraged to advocate for more RCTs in the public sector and examine the questions that programs really need answered. Only rigorous evaluations that ask meaningful questions will result in evidence-based programming and sustainable improvement.

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A Final Thought

The NAS created The Exchange in recognition of the many challenges of communicating science and engineering to a wider public. This has been a long-standing issue for scientists, who are well trained in their own craft but often not in translating their important findings effectively. On the other hand, the entertainment industry reaches enormous numbers of viewers, engaging them on important science-related issues in ways that STEM professionals rarely have the chance

to do. The retreats serve as a genuine and unique opportunity to connect a range of scientists to talented filmmakers seeking stories. The potential connections are mutually advantageous and clearly important. And The Exchange provides the National Academy of Sciences with a creative approach to rethink how to translate science for our daily lives.

For more information about the Science & Entertainment Exchange, visit scienceandentertainmentexchange.org.

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Conclusions

Proactive policing has become a key part of police efforts to combat crime in the United States. The report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine supports the general conclusion that there is sufficient scientific evidence to justify the adoption of some proactive policing practices. Proactive policing efforts that focus on high concentrations of crimes at places or among the high-rate subset of offenders, as well as practices that seek to solve specific crime-fostering problems, show consistent evidence of effectiveness without evidence of negative community outcomes. Community-based strategies have also begun to show evidence of improving relations between the police and public.

At the same time, there are significant gaps in the knowledge base that do not allow one to identify with reasonable confidence the long-term effects of proactive policing. Furthermore, solid evidence is lacking on the implications of proactive policing for legality and racial bias. While much has been learned, there is still much work that needs to be done so that police and the public can make good choices regarding proactive policing approaches.

The full National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine consensus report “Proactive Policing: Effects on Communities” can be freely downloaded at www.nap.edu/catalog/24928/proactive-policing-effects-on-crime-and-communities.



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Fresh Off the Press

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