THE MAGAZINE OF THE CENTER FOR EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME POLICY, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Translational Criminology

SPRING 2021

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

It is an understatement to say that we are all looking ahead to better days, both in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic and criminal justice reform this spring. There are many reasons to hope: The COVID-19 vaccines are becoming more widely available; some state and local governments continue to work for a more fair and effective justice system; and researchers are slowly but surely starting to get back to their fieldwork and discoveries.

After a year of multiple challenges, the return to field research is especially meaningful to the faculty, researchers, and students at the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP). Almost all of our work involves research in the field and partnerships with community groups and justice agencies. We have always valued these opportunities, but the past year made us especially aware of how fortunate we are to have the trust and confidence of the many people and groups with whom we collaborate. We appreciate everyone's patience as we get moving again. We also look forward to using the knowledge gained from this past year from both the pandemic and social justice movements to be even more conscious and intentional about our research activities.

Despite challenges to doing field research, we have not rested on our laurels. This year, the CEBCP team has tried to be responsive to everything going on around us and also stay true to our goals of rigorous and objective research and science-backed reforms. Toward this end, we began a conversation series with WestEd to bring to light the scant research that the field has on mitigating criminal justice disparities (highlighted in this issue). The importance and urgency of building this knowledge have been ever present but have become even more heightened by the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many others. As the current home to *Criminology & Public Policy* from the American Society of Criminology, we have released calls for papers for two special issues focusing on the George Floyd protests and demonstrations, as well as how race and ethnicity have (or have not) impacted place-based criminology, one of the CEBCP's signature research programs. We are also responding to the COVID-19 pandemic with new research collaborations that document and assess the pandemic's impact on criminal justice institutions and the communities they serve.

In this issue of *Translational Criminology*, we shine the spotlight on two friends of the CEBCP. One of the most significant individuals of the modern evidence-based crime policy era has been Laurie Robinson, former assistant attorney general of the United States during two presidential administrations, and the Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Criminology here at George Mason University. Laurie is retiring from Mason this spring, although she will remain as a senior fellow and trusted advisor with the CEBCP. In this issue, CEBCP's executive director David Weisburd interviews her for a special feature that showcases her accomplishments and importance to the CEBCP's goals. The second is Tony Hausner, a local community activist in Montgomery County, Maryland. Tony has retired from his role as founder and leader of Safe Silver Spring, although he will also continue his community work. Tony is a regular fixture at CEBCP symposia and congressional briefings and has consistently reached out to our partners and us for help understanding the state of the science. Activists like Tony, who are open to research knowledge, are an essential part of the evidence-based crime policy equation.

Although research has slowed during this last year, we wanted to take the opportunity to highlight two areas of research in the CEBCP that may not be as well known to some of our readership but that are directly relevant to the many challenges reflected in 2020. Professors Sue-Ming Yang and Charlotte Gill, Chief Howard Hall (Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame member), and the Roanoke County Police Department describe thought-provoking findings related to their years-long efforts to implement a co-responding unit for people in mental distress. Dr. Yang and her colleagues' work in this area will be a continued research focus for the CEBCP and a source of knowledge for the field. The other focus has been in the area of traffic enforcement, a significant activity of American policing that has been challenged by concerns of both fairness and effectiveness. Postdoctoral researcher Xiaoyun Wu and professors Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper discuss ongoing research in this area as they continue to examine this highly used activity from an evidence-based policing framework.

Finally, as many of you have heard, we had to cancel our June CEBCP Annual Symposium again this year due to COVID-19. We continue to avoid a virtual CEBCP symposium because we strongly believe that we need to see and interact with everyone in person after a year of countless virtual meetings. We look forward to June 2022 when we are confident we will be able to see everyone again.

Cynthia Lum
Director and Editor of *Translational Criminology*

David Weisburd
Executive Director

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

WestEd-CEBCP 2021 Conversation Series: Mitigating Disparities in the Justice System

BY ANTHONY PETROSINO, CYNTHIA LUM, AND ARENA C. LAM

Anthony Petrosino *is director of the Justice & Prevention Research Center at WestEd and a senior fellow at the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP).*

Cynthia Lum *is professor of Criminology, Law and Society and director of CEBCP at George Mason University.*

Arena Lam *is a research associate at WestEd's Justice & Prevention Research Center.*

Anthony Petrosino

Cynthia Lum

Arena Lam

The George Floyd murder in May 2020 again highlighted the different experiences that people of color, particularly Black and Brown persons, have when encountering the justice system. That 8 minutes and 46 seconds of video coverage ignited protests and civil unrest in the United States and worldwide, leading to considerable attention to addressing inequities and systemic racism across society and, most notably, in the justice system.

The criminal justice system in the United States, however, has grappled for many decades with racial and ethnic disparities in its outcomes. Findings from studies of juvenile justice, policing, pretrial and bail decisions, sentencing, and corrections consistently indicate inequities in the experiences of Black, Native American and Indigenous, and Hispanic American people in the criminal justice system compared to those of White people.[1] There has been a great deal of attention on the size, scope, and complex causes of these disparities. What has received far less attention, in our opinion, is understanding what we can do about them.

A critical question, therefore, that connects the work of researchers to that of policymakers and practitioners is "What are effective measures to mitigate systemwide justice disparities?" To respond to that question, WestEd's Justice & Prevention Research Center and the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University are partnering on a new virtual conversation series. This series will feature three policy discussion events designed to bring together research and policy experts to highlight the evidence on what works to mitigate disparities in the system and identify critical challenges to policy and practice implementation.

[1] The National Academies of Sciences has collated a bibliography on this topic, located at https://sites.nationalacademies.org/cs/groups/dbassesite/documents/webpage/dbasse_186072.pdf.

The first event in the series was held on January 12, 2021, and focused on police training. Following the murder of George Floyd and other police killings of unarmed Black and Brown persons, interventions designed to improve police training have been offered as one strategy to mitigate disparities in who gets policed and how. Several states and local jurisdictions have adopted new laws and policies to address police training, emphasizing mandatory courses on de-escalation and addressing implicit bias and other topics. At the federal level, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is supported by the Biden-Harris Administration, has as its goals "to hold law enforcement accountable for misconduct in court, improve transparency through data collection, and reform police training and policies." Thus, training would be a primary focus should this legislation pass the U.S. Senate and be signed into law by the President.

For the January 12 event, we brought together four of the leading research and practice experts in the United States to discuss police training and its promise for mitigating disparities. The panel included Tracy Meares, Walton Hale Hamilton Professor and founding director of the Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School; Lorie Fridell, professor of Criminology at the University of South Florida; Robin Engel, professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Cincinnati and director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)/University of Cincinnati Center for Police Research and Policy; and Tarrick McGuire, deputy chief of the Arlington (Texas) Police Department. Four main types of training were discussed, and we summarize some of the highlights on the pages that follow.

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Tracy Meares

Procedural Justice Training

Meares discussed training on procedural justice—a theory in social psychology concerned with how people come to conclusions about the fairness of legal authorities such as police, judges, and other actors. Procedural justice research shows that people care about the fairness of decision-making by authorities. Procedural justice emphasizes respect, neutrality, factuality, and transparency in the exercise of authority, while providing opportunities for civilians to explain their side of events. Recent research demonstrates that procedural justice trainings delivered to police officers in Chicago and Seattle were associated with reductions in complaints about use of force and use of force itself over two years (Owens et al., 2018; Wood et al., 2020). The Chicago study involved more than 8,000 police officers, demonstrating the feasibility of implementing procedural justice training to scale and creating more fair interactions between police and the public. Possible strategies to make procedural justice training more effective include linking procedural justice training to other approaches, such as de-escalation and implicit bias training; applying procedural justice internally within the police agency; and involving the public in developing policies for which officers are trained.

Lorie Fridell

Implicit Bias Training

Fridell discussed implicit bias training to mitigate disparities in policing. Implicit biases are outside of our conscious awareness and are stereotypes that can impact our perceptions and behaviors, even in well-intended people who at the conscious level reject biases, stereotypes, and prejudices. Implicit bias training makes trainees aware of biases that they may not know they have and provides them the motivation and strategies to produce impartial behavior. Research has shown consistent and positive effects of implicit bias training on knowledge, attitudes, and intentions. For example, New York City Police Department police officers who participated in an implicit bias training were more concerned about discrimination as a social problem, more likely to recognize biased policing as a legitimate concern of the public, and less likely to believe that only racist officers engage in bias policing compared to a control group (Worden et al., 2020). However, the link between implicit bias training and officer behaviors has not been well established in research. Fridell noted the challenges of detecting the effect of a single training on behavioral outcomes in policing, but encourages additional research so we can better understand the effects of implicit bias training on police and other criminal justice personnel. Implicit bias training should not be expected to be the panacea to reducing disparities in criminal justice. Rather, it is a necessary component of multidimensional efforts. Fridell also argued that implicit bias training can be further strengthened by leadership reinforcing implicit bias training messages, such as continuously conveying their commitment to impartial policing through personnel evaluations, mission statements, and academy and in-service training.

Lorie Engel

De-escalation Training

Engel discussed de-escalation training as an approach to reduce use of force more generally. De-escalation training is endorsed by various stakeholders, including police practitioners and researchers, and has been widely adopted by police agencies across the nation. Despite all this, little is known about the quantity, quality, and content of police training on de-escalation. There is wide variation in de-escalation training, offered by dozens of training vendors, some in-house training developed by each agency's own police trainers, and no uniform accepted definition of de-escalation. Until this past year, there was no evidence regarding the effectiveness of de-escalation training for policing, despite its popularity. However, new studies are underway to evaluate various de-escalation trainings implemented in Arizona, Cincinnati, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Thus far, two studies have found changes in officers' attitudes and self-reported behaviors (Engel et al., 2020; McLean et al., 2020). One randomized control trial (Engel et al., 2020) reported statistically significant reductions in officer use of force, citizen injuries, and officer injuries. The reductions in both citizen and officer injuries indicate that de-escalation training can make police-citizen encounters safer. While these findings are encouraging, more research is needed to examine training content delivery and how de-escalation training is associated with racial and ethnic disparities.

Tarrick McGuire

Community Policing Training

McGuire discussed one staple of police training in the United States—community policing. Community policing promotes having law enforcement agencies build relationships and trust with the communities they serve, especially in disenfranchised areas where they have frequent contacts. McGuire discussed three areas by which community police training may be enhanced—through concepts and mechanisms of social equity, racial equity, and justice. In particular, he discussed how each might be applied to reduce over-enforcement, integrate restorative justice practices, address substance abuse by providing people the help they need, address hate crimes, and treat people with fairness, decency, and respect. He also noted that an essential element of community policing is collaboration between police departments and community members, with both coming to the table in an intentional way, applying research-based evidence, and listening to each other carefully. McGuire suggested that one potential strategy toward this shift is having community members be actively involved in community policing training.

Conclusion

While it was clear from the discussion that police training is not the panacea to the many challenges facing policing today, it can be an important element if such training is more intentionally and carefully linked to actual police behaviors and supervision. Sound theories may support new training in procedural justice, implicit bias, de-escalation, and community collaboration, but translating and implementing those ideas into tangible and sustainable options by officers on the street requires much more than just acquiring knowledge. As Lum (2021) notes, changes in supervision, deployment tactics, accountability approaches, and training delivery mechanisms would be needed to achieve the ideals of training in practice. Researcher-practitioner partnerships should continue to build evaluation research in this area to determine whether such training can mitigate racial and ethnic disparities. Unintended consequences of training and associated behavioral changes should also be examined, including whether training might have backfire effects on either officer receptivity to reforms or actual outcomes.

Information about the WestEd-CEBCP "Mitigating Racial and Ethnic Disparities" conversation series and the recording of this first eventcan at wested.org/resources/can-racial-and-ethnic-disparities-be-mitigated-through-police-training.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

Laurie Robinson: A Lifetime of Public Service Connecting Science to National Decision-Making in Criminal Justice

*In this issue, we celebrate Professor **Laurie Robinson**, who is retiring from George Mason University as a distinguished Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Criminology, Law and Society. Her extensive career in public service, in particular the U.S. Department of Justice, has advanced the use of science in federal, state, and local criminal justice policymaking. Executive director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) David Weisburd interviews her about her contributions.*

You have served two administrations (Presidents Clinton and Obama) as assistant U.S. attorney general for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) in the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Can you tell us about those experiences and how you came to advocate for bringing science into criminal justice policymaking at the federal level?

In the Clinton administration, the Crime Bill—what became the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act—was a high priority in 1994. As members of Congress debated provisions of the bill over the summer before its passage, there was enormous ridicule about the crime prevention provisions it contained. They were labeled worthless "midnight basketball" programs (since a number provided recreational initiatives for youth). Even though the final bill authorized several prevention programs, once the bill passed, most of the funding for crime prevention was killed.

At the same time, members rushed through the multibillion-dollar Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth-in-Sentencing Program, providing incentives to states to keep prisoners incarcerated for 85 percent of their sentences. By contrast to the prevention programs, this section went on to receive billions of dollars in appropriations in the years that followed.

What is notable is that neither of these Congressional actions was based on science—the lack of support for prevention or the backing of long-term incarceration. As the head of the agency tasked by Attorney General [Janet] Reno with the Crime Bill implementation, that made no sense to me and sharpened my attention to the importance of linking science to criminal justice policy.

One tool I used for this is not widely known: With the billions of Crime Bill dollars that came annually to OJP, I was able to greatly enhance our criminal justice science enterprise and to strengthen our ability to link evidence to program and policy.

How did we do that? I was able to persuade our Congressional appropriators to let us use 1 percent of funding off the top of our Crime Bill programs to support major scientific investments in crime-related research and knowledge development, including funding for

- policing research (from the COPS program);
- corrections, probation, and parole-release research (from the prison-building initiative);
- research relating to sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking (from the Violence Against Women program); and
- research on substance abuse [from the Drug Courts and Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) programs].

Because the appropriations in the '90s for these Crime Bill programs were so large—my OJP budget was more than $4 billion a year—the 1 percent transferred to our National Institute of Justice (NIJ) annually was the largest amount of spending on criminal justice research in the nation's history. And under the strategic leadership of NIJ director Jeremy Travis, this made a substantial contribution to new knowledge about crime and how to deal with it. To cite just one example: The original thinking on the concept of "prisoner reentry" grew out of sessions Jeremy convened in the late '90s with these Crime Bill funds.

We also tried—with Crime Bill programs—to ensure that science could influence implementation. For example, under the new statute we received $24 million in funding to implement "boot camps." We were not enthusiastic about that since we knew from Doris MacKenzie's research that military-style boot camps had not been found to be effective in reducing recidivism; instead, she found it was far more important to emphasize therapeutic programming, cognitive skills, and drug treatment. So we held a "technical assistance" conference for boot camp program grantees to direct them toward the evidence-based approaches that Dr. MacKenzie had identified, and we coupled that with individualized technical assistance in their own jurisdictions once they returned home. We wanted to ensure that, if we had to fund boot camps, our grantees would make them as effective as possible. It's the first time I remember OJP using science so specifically to drive programmatic dollars and ensure they would be effectively spent—and the Crime Bill made that possible. It's a model we continued to try to follow. As a final note on this, we also talked to the appropriators about the research…and they stopped funding boot camps.

In the mammoth Crime Bill there were literally dozens of grant programs *authorized* that were never given *appropriations*. So it was up to the appropriators to sort out what they would choose to fund. I saw that as an opportunity. So, I started meeting regularly with the appropriations staffers to provide them with research studies to encourage them to fund the Crime Bill-authorized programs that *did* have a grounding in science. One big success I had was with RSAT. The staff of Congressman Harold Rogers (R-KY), who chaired our House Appropriations Subcommittee, after much discussion, was sold on the fact that research (such as work by Doug Lipton and James Inciardi) shows that drug treatment in prisons, particularly when coupled with treatment after release, can dramatically lower recidivism rates. RSAT was funded by the Hill in 1996 and has been supported every year since, no matter what party has been in control of Congress.

Along with the Crime Bill, another very influential development during this time was OJP's 1997 publication of the so-called "Maryland Report." It was written by criminologist Larry Sherman and his colleagues at the University of Maryland [and officially titled] *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*. [The report] catalogued in brief summary for every major program in criminal justice what existing research told us about its effectiveness. And in each instance, it spelled out the strength of the science, using what has become known as the "Maryland scale." It created quite a stir in the field—but also on Capitol Hill and is probably the only criminology volume I've ever seen members of Congress reading! And it had an impact. Congressman Rogers was *very* interested in the report—and relied on it to cut off federal funding for the DARE program!

Photo by Chuck Kennedy

On March 2, 2015, President Barack Obama delivered remarks to the press pool after a meeting with members of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing in the Roosevelt Room of the White House.

I left the Justice Department in 2000 and began working with Larry Sherman at Penn's new department of criminology in the years that followed. One of our first initiatives was to launch a master of science program with the mission of creating "change agents" for evidence-based approaches to crime prevention. Working in that setting, with the wonderful experience of learning from Larry Sherman, only increased my passion to build bridges between science and policy and practice.

I had no intention at that time of going back into government. I enjoyed teaching and running the MS program. I did, however, get involved in the Obama campaign in 2008 and was asked to serve on the Justice Department transition team once he won the election. But I still had no plans to reenter government. However, the newly named Attorney General (AG) Eric Holder had other ideas and started leaning on me to come back to OJP. In addition to the fact that I had loved working with Eric when he was deputy AG in the '90s, I was also intrigued by the fact that he said he would support my interest in making science my top priority. I told him I had always regretted—in the intervening years—not having established a "what works" clearinghouse at OJP in the '90s. By coming back, I'd have a second shot at this. I also had the idea of establishing a science advisory board for OJP, and I secured his support for that as well.

I did return to OJP in the winter of 2009, knowing we had both a president who recognized the value of science and an attorney general who backed the importance of research and evidence in shaping criminal justice policy. One reflection of that was AG Holder's naming of OJP's Science Advisory Board, which included academics, practitioners, and others to provide scientific guidance and help inform our program development work. Reflecting the high caliber of the appointees, the AG named Dr. Alfred Blumstein to chair the body.

I also took specific steps within OJP as I started my second tour to promote an evidence-based approach to our work. This was through the Evidence Integration Initiative (E2I) launched under the leadership of Dr. Phelan Wyrick on my staff. Its three objectives were to (a) improve the quantity and quality of evidence OJP generated through our research, evaluation, and statistical functions; (b) integrate evidence more effectively into program and policy decisions; and (c) improve the translation of evidence into practice. Through this effort, as an example, we set up common expectations and definitions for credible evidence across the agency's grant programs and aimed for high levels of rigor in research design. These goals were facilitated by our ability to bring on board outstanding leaders for NIJ (John Laub) and Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) (Jim Lynch). Both brought tremendous vision to their work.

In yet another area, I worked with the appropriators and suggested that with the large multibillion-dollar budget coming to OJP, they consider supplementing OJP's science funding by taking just 1 percent off the top of the entire agency budget and providing

Photo by Evan Cantwell

Professor Laurie O. Robinson, Clarence J. Robinson Professor of Criminology, Law and Society and co-chair of President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, and Shirley Ginwright (far right on stage), president of the NAACP in Fairfax and chair of the Fairfax County Communities of Trust Committee, interact with students following the Freedom and Learning Forum, "Policing Race: Critical Analyses of National Trends."

Photo by Evan Cantwell

Robinson Professor Laurie Robinson invited Eric Holder, the 82nd U.S. attorney general, for a dialogue on criminology, law and society with Honors College students, who also presented research to Holder during class on campus.

it to NIJ and BJS for research, statistical studies, and evaluation. Happily, the appropriators agreed—and that important step has continued until today, with the percentage up to 2 percent in the FY 2021 appropriation.

Finally, in 2011, I was able to realize my goal of a federally supported "what works" clearinghouse. Thanks to great work by OJP staff—Phelan Wyrick, Brecht Donoghue, and Jennifer Tyson—we launched CrimeSolutions.gov. It is an online resource that now rates more than 625 evidence-based programs in topic areas including corrections, courts, juvenile and criminal justice, and victim services. Each comes with evidence ratings of "Effective," "Promising," or "No effects." And CrimeSolutions has more than 40,000 subscribers receiving its regular updates. It's NIJ's most popular subscriber list!

What do you feel are your most important achievements?

I'd mention three things. First, I had the opportunity—I was blessed to work with inspired leaders in Janet Reno and Eric Holder—to help turn the state and local criminal justice field to a greater degree toward embracing evidence-based practices. Particularly when I came back to the department in 2009 under President Obama and made this the top-line priority at OJP, it seemed to be on everyone's lips. And with AG Holder's backing, science became something that DOJ began to buy into department-wide. We also saw, with the backing of members like Representatives Rogers and Frank Wolf (R-VA), support across the aisle for evidence-based approaches, so there was broad backing from Congress.

Second, I'm especially proud of some of the legacies of the Obama era—for example, establishing CrimeSolutions.gov and the OJP Science Advisory Board, which I anticipate will be revived in the Biden administration.

And third—and this may sound a little quirky—but I feel as if, with Eric Holder's strong backing, I had a chance as head of OJP to be a "warrior for science." I know in policing these days we're trying to retire the "warrior" label, but when you're in Washington you've got to fight hard in your own department for your budget, master the appropriations process and work the halls at [the Office of

Management and Budget], scramble on Capitol Hill, push for what you care about—and, while you need to be politically astute, you can't make it political. In fact, I'm proud that I worked very well with both sides of the aisle. But you have to be tough and push through your priorities. We made real gains that are lasting, not just at the federal level but perhaps even more in state and local criminal justice.

Changes in administrations can sometimes undo the work of previous administrations or cause instability in the use of science in federal policymaking. How much do you think political turnovers affect efforts to raise the importance and profile of science in the DNA of the Department of Justice? Or: How do you institutionalize science into government that is constantly reinventing itself?

One of the prerogatives of a new administration is to clearly set its own priorities, but there are certain bedrock fundamentals that one hopes are carried forward, such as ensuring that the NIJ and BJS operate without political bias or censorship and with a deep respect for basic scientific principles. One important way to support this is to hire and educate a strong and resilient career staff, including both Senior Executive Service (SES) and midlevel career civil servants who are first rate, well respected in the field, and who can serve as an effective bridge between administrations. Now, sometimes a new team arrives who simply has little interest in or respect for the civil service. But, by and large, administrations of both parties have worked well with Justice Department civil servants over the years.

Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) executive director David Weisburd, pictured on the right, and Director Cynthia Lum, pictured on the left, congratulate Robinson Professor and Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy awardee Laurie Robinson at the 2013 CEBCP-SIPR Joint Symposium and Congressional Briefing on Evidence-Based Policing.

Photo by Alexis Glenn

There *are* other steps that can be taken, however. As one example: The Trump administration dissolved the Science Advisory Board (SAB) that Attorney General Holder and I set up. The Trump Justice Department apparently did not value its contributions, even though it could have made its own appointments to the board. To forestall this problem in the future, I'd suggest working with Congress to statutorily create the SAB and require by law 3 or 4 meetings a year. Language might also require that members serve until a replacement is named to avert the possibility that a new team would simply leave many vacancies. With tailored language, it can be made more difficult for a new administration to sideline an important body of this kind.

The new Biden administration is taking the helm during a very tumultuous time for criminal justice in the United States. Currently, there is a great deal of advocacy for criminal justice reforms, some of which we do not have a great deal of knowledge about. How do you balance the need for research and science with public urgency that something needs to be done soon?

Having been in this field since the 1970s, I often reflect on the fact that through most of those decades few policymakers or average citizens cared much about "our" issues. Certainly they reacted to concerns about crack cocaine in the 1990s when legislators rushed to enact tough-on-crime measures. But by contrast, this past year, with national protests following George Floyd's death, saw a broad awakening by the American public to the need to focus on issues of equity in the criminal justice system. That, in turn, has prompted attention from political leaders at federal, state, and local levels.

Reforms will not be simple or easy to fashion or implement, but it is important to support the broad dialogue that started in 2020. One of the benefits of our decentralized criminal justice system is that there are, of course, myriad opportunities for experiments to test different approaches and learn from them. Here is where the kind of partnerships that CEBCP has fostered over the years between researchers and practitioners can be critical. I urge CEBCP to play a leadership role in reaching out to jurisdictions moving forward with reform proposals— and there are many—and propose a partnership to evaluate results. Furthermore, I encourage CEBCP to call on other researchers across the country to do the same. Academics need to "stand up and be counted" to help in needed knowledge development about reform proposals that reflect public backing.

In your career, you have always had one foot inside of academia. What is your advice to universities and their researchers who are examining crime and criminal justice issues?

First, it may not be popular to say this, but I've been surprised—despite my knowledge of universities—at how much academic life is still terribly cloistered from life on the outside. There are obviously exceptions, and the work of the Center on Evidence-Based Crime Policy is certainly one. But a major recommendation I have for criminologists is to stay engaged, to get out there, and to do a lot of listening! Are you going to meetings of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the American Correctional Association, the American Probation and Parole Association, the National Sheriffs Association, or the National Conference of Chief Justices, just to name a few? I don't mean to give a keynote address and leave, but also to talk to people. To hear what's on their minds, to find out what issues they're worrying about, what research questions they'd like to have answered, to explore potential partnerships. I think that kind of dialogue is critical.

Second, if we are serious about wanting policymakers and practitioners to read research findings and pay heed to them, we need to make them accessible. This is hardly a new message, but it remains a problem. Academic articles are not the means of reaching these important audiences. Therefore, if universities are serious about supporting translational work, they're going to need to revise promotion and tenure criteria accordingly.

Third, at a time when our country is doing a good deal of self-examination about racism and criminal justice reform, academics steeped in crime and criminal justice can contribute a great deal to the discussion. At the same time, I suggest—from a long career in criminal justice—that solutions will best be found not by any one group working alone, but by many talking and working together. Partnerships beyond the walls of academe will likely yield the most impact. Support from universities for these kinds of external collaborations could enhance the influence of academics in important policy settings.

Improving Police Response to Mental Health Crises in a Rural Community[1]

BY SUE-MING YANG, CHARLOTTE GILL, L. CAIT KANEWSKE, YI-FANG LU, MUNEEBA AZAM, PAIGE S. THOMPSON, HOWARD HALL, JAMES A. CHAPMAN

Sue-Ming Yang *and* ***Charlotte Gill*** *are associate professors of criminology, law and society at George Mason University;* ***L. Cait Kanewske****,* ***Yi-Fang Lu****,* ***Muneeba Azam****, and* ***Paige S. Thompson*** *are the research assistants for this project; Chief* ***Howard Hall*** *and Assistant Chief* ***James A. Chapman*** *lead the Roanoke County Police Department.*

Police departments are often the first—and only—resource available for people experiencing mental health emergencies in rural areas. The lack of community mental health services and other barriers, including expansive geography, relative isolation, and socioeconomic challenges in many rural communities, can make it difficult for residents to access appropriate treatment and services (Mohatt et al., 2006, Weisheit et al., 2006). However, the police are rarely sufficiently trained or equipped to serve as first responders for mental health crises. Mental health calls can lead to an increased risk of police use of force, officer safety concerns, and disproportionate involvement of people with mental health issues in the criminal justice system (e.g., Cordner, 2006; Morabito & Socia, 2015; Reuland, 2010; Rossler & Terrill, 2017; Ruiz & Miller, 2004; Schulenberg, 2016; Teplin, 2000). They also require significant time and resources to resolve successfully, which is a challenge to the efficiency of police departments with limited resources and available personnel (e.g., Akins et al., 2016; Borum et al., 1998; Cordner, 2006).

Between 2016 and 2020, Professors Sue-Ming Yang and Charlotte Gill from the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy collaborated with the Roanoke County Police Department (RCPD) and Roanoke-based mental health practitioners (MHP) Intercept Youth Services on a Bureau of Justice Assistance Smart Policing Initiative grant to understand and improve RCPD's response to mental health-related calls for service using an innovative randomized controlled experimental evaluation design. Roanoke County is a primarily suburban-rural county in Southwest Virginia.[2] Compared to many other rural areas it is relatively large, with a population of more than 93,000 and 142 sworn officers in the police department, but it covers a large, mountainous area of 250 square miles, with a number of isolated communities.

Roanoke County's overall crime rates are relatively low, and mental health calls account for only 2 percent of RCPD's calls for service. However, these calls disproportionately consume police resources. The average time officers spend on mental health-related calls is about two hours and 28 minutes, compared to 39 minutes for all other calls. Consistent with the research, mental health-related calls in Roanoke County disproportionately involve use of force compared to other call types. From 2014 to 2016, 4 percent of mental health calls involved force, versus just 0.2 percent of all other call types. More than 20 percent of all use-of-force calls during the same time period were associated with mental health-related calls (Yang et al., 2018; 2020). RCPD's mental health-related calls are also highly concentrated at specific locations—100 percent of calls clustered in fewer than 2 percent of the county's street segments annually between 2013 and 2017 (Yang et al., 2020). Although RCPD is committed to the successful resolution of mental health-related calls—all officers receive the full 40-hour Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training at the academy—a survey we conducted at the beginning of the project also showed that officers were frustrated by the challenges of these calls, including long call clearance times and repeat calls involving the same individuals (Yang et al., 2018, 2020). The challenge of resolving these calls in a timely, safe, and satisfactory manner for all parties is particularly pronounced in Roanoke County,

[1] This article is based on our publicly available technical report (Yang et al., 2020).

[2] RCPD does not provide police services to the City of Roanoke, which has a population of almost 100,000. However, it serves the city's suburbs and the nearby towns of Salem and Vinton and has concurrent jurisdiction with the Roanoke City Police Department.

like other rural areas, where psychiatric facilities and resources are highly selective and space is limited.

To address these issues, our multiagency partnership developed an innovative police-MHP co-responder model in which Intercept clinicians responded to mental health-related calls with RCPD officers in order to provide immediate access to treatment and services. We evaluated the effectiveness of the co-responder model using a randomized controlled trial design in which we randomly assigned police shifts to either the treatment or control condition. During treatment shifts, officers initially responded to mental health-related calls according to standard operating procedures. After securing the scene and determining that the individual was eligible to participate in the study,[3] officers contacted Intercept's 24-hour Crisis One hotline and a clinician responded to the scene within one hour. Once the MHP arrived and the officers felt that the situation was under control, they left the individual in the care of the MHP, who provided crisis stabilization services and could offer a connection to subsequent treatment services as needed. The MHP also obtained consent from the individual to participate in the research. If they gave consent, they were eligible to receive further screening and at least 40 hours of mental health treatment from Intercept, funded by the grant.

During control shifts, officers responded to calls according to standard operating procedures, which include the use of CIT de-escalation strategies. Once the situation was stabilized, officers provided a flyer about the research project and obtained permission to share the individual's contact details with CEBCP researchers. The research team then called the individuals to obtain consent for a phone survey and the sharing of data about the call from RCPD. In both conditions, we collaborated with Roanoke County's Emergency Communications Center to develop a project case number for each eligible call for service that allowed the research team to receive data without breaching participants' privacy or confidentiality. Between June 2016 and June 2019, we randomly assigned 2,795 shifts to the treatment (50.7 percent, N=1,416) or control (49.3 percent, N=1,379) condition and recruited 140 people who agreed to participate in the study (93 in the treatment group and 47 in the control group).

Our analysis by treatment and control shifts showed that the intervention had no statistically significant effects on calls for service of any kind among the experiment participants. However, we also discovered that only 33 of the 93 people in the treatment group (35.5 percent) gave further consent to Intercept to receive mental health treatment. The people who received further treatment had fewer calls for service overall, and mental health calls specifically, following the intervention. But those who declined services saw an *increase* in all calls to the police. Intercept clinicians also expressed disappointment in the high rates of attrition and lack of continuing participation by clients.

[3] People were eligible if they did not require emergency custody (i.e., they posed no immediate threat to themselves or others) and there were no grounds for arrest.

Our findings show that individual motivation to accept and continue treatment is an important determinant of the success of police-MHP co-responder models. This particular finding has been confirmed by the focus group interviews with the Intercept clinicians. Intercept clinicians expressed primarily negative views when asked about their overall perception of the project's efficacy, feeling that client receptivity to participating in the program was generally low and faded over the period of the project. Furthermore, Intercept clinicians noted high levels of client attrition across the study period as well as problems encountered when working with clients who had co-occurring substance abuse issues, which made them unsuitable for cognitive behavioral therapy. Nonetheless, despite the disappointing findings overall, RCPD command staff and officers had extremely positive reactions to the intervention. They believed it reduced the amount of time officers spent responding to mental health-related calls, reduced repeat calls to the police, and reduced officer stress. Based on the analysis of police data, the average time spent per call for the experimental group changed from 88.76 minutes to 46.04 minutes post-intervention. The reduction was even more substantial when focusing on mental health-related calls. While the total number of calls did not change that much on average, police spent 63.81 minutes less per mental health call compared to before the intervention.

Taken together, perceptions of the intervention's efficacy followed two distinct and opposite trajectories for RCPD officers and Intercept clinicians. Whereas many RCPD officers began the project with a degree of skepticism (while still voicing largely positive views of the project), they came to eventually believe wholeheartedly (in the case of command staff and midnight shift officers) or mostly (in the case of RCPD day-shift officers) in the effectiveness of the intervention. Intercept clinicians, on the other hand, began the project with more positive views but by the end of the intervention espoused more negative views about the overall efficacy of the endeavor. These differences in perception may be due to the differences in roles played by the various project participants. More specifically, because officers usually were free to leave experimental shift calls after Intercept clinicians arrived, they perceived the co-responder model as mostly effective

because it succeeded in reducing the amount of time they felt they spent responding to calls and (as far as they were aware) introduced at-need individuals to mental health treatment. However, due to the low levels of experimental group consent to treatment and high

subject attrition over time, from the vantage point of Intercept clinicians, the intervention was largely ineffective.

Our project leads to several important recommendations for police departments and communities who are seeking to improve their response to calls for service involving people with mental health issues, particularly those in rural or non-urban areas. First, building relationships with local MHPs and other community institutions, such as drug rehabilitation centers and addiction services, is a powerful way to develop best practices for mutual support and effective responses, especially where resources are limited. Police CIT training should include specific scenario-based training for responding to various types of mental health-related calls for service and information on how to inform and connect community members who call with mental health-related concerns with local services and treatment options. Departments may also benefit from identifying hot spots of mental health-related calls, as we found these calls were highly concentrated in a small number of geographic areas. This in turn may inform departments' ability to identify and connect with local services. Finally, the results of our experiment indicate the importance of police and MHPs working together to identify best practices for motivating individuals with mental health issues to adopt and continue mental health treatment, and of incorporating care coordination into co-responder and treatment procedures to ensure that participants continue to receive needed services.

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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

The Bridge between Criminal Justice Research and Community Action

An Interview with Tony Hausner

***Tony Hausner** is a community leader who is the founder and former president of Safe Silver Spring in Montgomery County, Maryland. He is a long-time participant in many of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP)'s symposia and a user of its research.*

*In this feature, CEBCP director **Cynthia Lum** interviews Hausner about how criminal justice research is used by community activists and policymakers alike to improve justice outcomes.*

One hallmark of your efforts has been in using research to guide your community and public policy efforts. How did you get started in this research-to-practice link?

My involvement in criminal justice research began when I was pursuing my doctorate, which focused on research on juvenile delinquency programs.[1] In that study, I used several different methods to assess the behavioral outcomes of delinquency treatment program graduates. I assessed behavior at home and school and found consistency across the settings and demonstrated the validity of the behavioral measures. When I graduated, I ended up focusing on health policy and spent 13 years directing program evaluation research for the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Some of that research led to significant changes in federal legislation. For example, in one project on prenatal care, we showed a 33 percent reduction in low-birth-weight babies that resulted in major expansions in the Medicaid prenatal care program.[2] In another project, I proposed that we use activities of daily living as part of the Medicare home health payment and quality assurance systems. This led to a 25 percent reduction in hospitalizations for such patients and was incorporated by legislation in 1998 into the Medicare home health systems.[3] As indicated in this discussion, so much of my career has focused on generating and implementing research and program evaluation into improving ongoing programs or creating new program services, such as the expansion of comprehensive prenatal services to a new population.

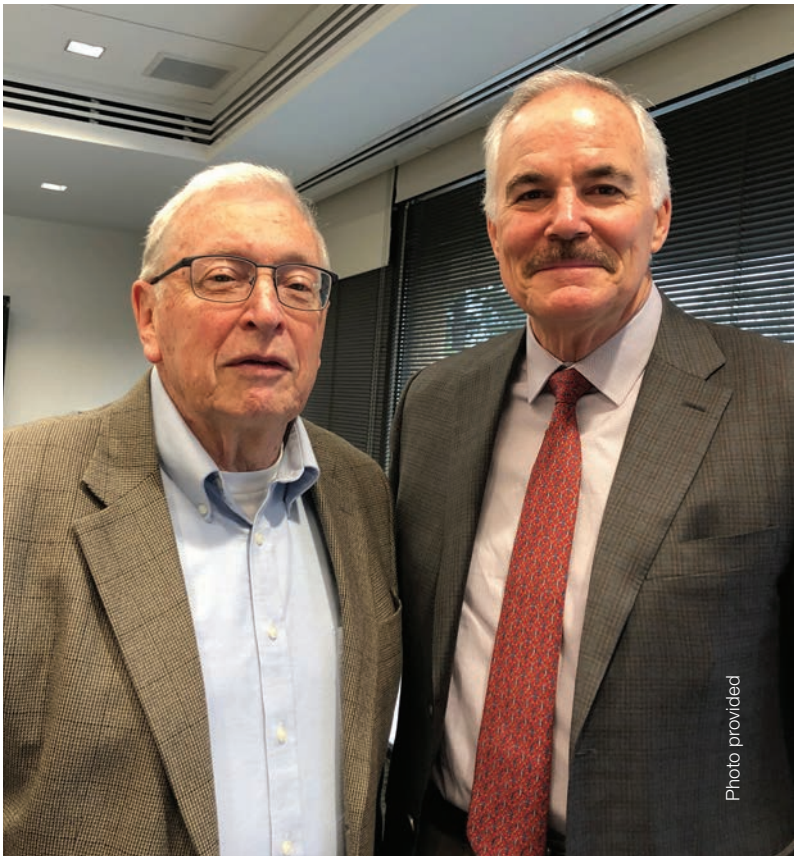

Photo provided

Tony Hausner with former Montgomery County Police Department chief Tom Manger

I firmly believe that research and program evaluation research is the strongest test of a methodology or program's validity. Thus, it is the best guide in determining whether or not to establish a new program, modify an existing program, or terminate a program. This does not preclude the development of programs without being research based, as it is not always practical to conduct such research. However, wherever possible, research is the most decisive test of programs.

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1 Hausner, T. "New Methods to Assess the Behavioral Consequences of Delinquency Treatment Programs." Unpublished Dissertation. University of Kentucky, 1975.

2 See Lennie, A., Klun, J., Hausner, T. (1987). Low-birth-weight rate reduced by obstetrical access project. *Health Care Financing Review, 8*(3), 83–86.

3 The Balanced Budget of 1997. Public Law 105-33.

Photo provided

Tony Hausner speaking at a gun safety rally

Many know you from your work for Safe Silver Spring. Can you talk about how the organization began and some of your efforts translating and using criminal justice research with this community action group?

I have lived for over 40 years in Silver Spring, Maryland (a city inside of Montgomery County, Maryland, right outside the District of Columbia line). Over the years, I have been involved as a volunteer community activist dealing with many issues involving schools, transportation, and development, and more recently, the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Further, I have been active in local, state, and national politics and elections. In 2008, a violent gang murder in Silver Spring prompted local community leaders to focus on gangs and crime in our area. In response, representatives of several community groups organized and planned a conference around the concern. Over 200 people attended, including students, elected officials, lawyers, leaders of criminal justice programs such as the state's attorney, academics, gang prevention program workers, and personnel from corrections and police departments. Community leaders and members of the Latino community played especially critical roles in planning the conference, as some of the key gangs consisted of Latino members.

The conference produced a set of recommendations that guided our plans for the first two years.[4] These activities led to the creation of Safe Silver Spring, a community-based organization focused on crime, of which I served as president from 2009 to 2017. We developed positions on several issues and engaged in various advocacy activities, including providing testimony at the Montgomery County Council and the Maryland state legislature and lobbying elected officials. We used program evaluation results to guide the directions we took and often assembled research to support our case to carry out these activities.

For example, in 2013 we spent considerable time successfully working on gun safety legislation in the Maryland legislature, working especially with Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence, an advocacy organization that has been involved in gun safety issues for many years. Part of our strategy to advocate for the 2013 legislation was to help organize a large-scale rally and subsequent lobbying of legislators. We used research from organizations such as the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence (EFSGV) to successfully advocate

[4] Safe Silver Spring Action Steps Summary 2009. See https://tinyurl.com/SSSactionsteps2009.

for gun legislation passed in Maryland in 2013. Their research showed that gun protective orders resulted in reductions in gun violence.[5] More recently, we used EFSGV research to support legislation on the use of extreme risk protective orders (ERPO). Again, research showed that ERPOs reduced the incidence of gun violence.[6] We also worked with researchers from Johns Hopkins University in Maryland on gathering research for our advocacy efforts.

Other examples of our use of program evaluation research for our activities have been in truancy court programs and their efforts to reduce crime and improve school attendance and graduation,[7] and domestic violence protective orders to reduce incidences of domestic violence.[8]

Do you think elected officials are more receptive to community advocacy when it is based in research?

When possible, I try to ground my recommendations to policymakers on research and program evaluation. Research is the strongest basis for ensuring that a program and its methodology have validity. I have found that Montgomery County government officials have respected the research I have used to support my advocacy. I have also found that state elected leaders are generally responsive to the research results presented to them. For example, this was demonstrated by the legislation passed in Annapolis involving gun safety and domestic violence. When we advocated for gun safety legislation in 2013, National Rifle Association-affiliated organizations conducted counter demonstrations at the same time as we did. However, we turned out a much larger contingent of advocates and had research to support our cause. This helped in persuading the Maryland Assembly to pass such legislation. In sum, there have been reductions in gun violence, declines in domestic violence, and successful outcomes for those teenagers who participated in truancy court programs. So, the research used to support our advocacy of these programs validated the outcomes that we referenced in the testimony that we provided to the county council and state legislature.

Sometimes research doesn't support positions that community groups or activists want to see politically. What happens when you find out that research is not supportive of your positions?

I recently attended a virtual conversation series sponsored by George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy and the WestEd Justice and Prevention Research Center on "Mitigating Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Criminal Justice System."[9] It focused on three key training ideas: implicit bias, procedural justice, and de-escalation. My main takeaways were that so far research has shown that these strategies change attitudes but do not significantly impact behavior. Thus, while I see many advocates recommend that police reforms include implicit bias and de-escalation training, I would likely recommend that policymakers hold off on such steps until we know that research supports such programs. I strongly recommend that community action be based on research to the extent available to support such initiatives, and especially program evaluation research to guide our administration of criminal justice programs. As I mentioned earlier, one does not always have the opportunity to conduct the desired research. However, it is a great advantage to have such research in hand either before a program or methodology is implemented or as soon thereafter as possible. Further, to the extent possible, the strongest measures of a program are outcome measures (e.g., reduction in crime, obtaining employment, etc.).

You mentioned that you retired from Safe Silver Spring a few years ago. But I imagine it is hard to retire from activism, especially in the community where you live. What's next for you?

While I am no longer playing a role in Safe Silver Spring, I still have an interest in criminal justice issues. I particularly stay in touch with these issues because I have focused recently on the racial inequities that exist in our society. This has led me to focus on additional criminal justice reforms and police reforms.[10] Thus, I have put together a legislation package that I support in this year's Maryland General Assembly. In addition, I have put together a list of resources that address racial equity as well as health care reforms from national and state perspectives.

5 See https://efsgv.org/learn/policies/assault-weapons-and-large-capacity-magazines.

6 See https://efsgv.org/learn/policies/extreme-risk-laws.

7 See http://law.ubalt.edu/centers/cfcc/pdfs/FamiliesMatterReport-UpdatedJune2014-FINAL08-04.pdf.

8 See https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi551.

9 See https://www.wested.org/resources/can-racial-and-ethnic-disparities-be-mitigated-through-police-training.

10 For more accomplishments by Tony Hausner as president of Safe Silver Spring and through his professional and community activism work, see http://healthreformaction.blogspot.com/2017/04/my-community-and-professional.html.

Photo provided

A meeting of Safe Silver Spring

The Use of Proactive Traffic Enforcement by Police Agencies

BY XIAOYUN WU, CYNTHIA LUM,
AND CHRISTOPHER S. KOPER

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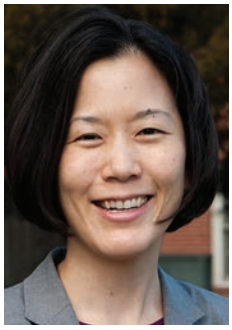
Christopher Koper *is an associate professor of criminology, law and society and principal fellow of the CEBCP.*

Xiaoyun Wu


Cynthia Lum

Christopher Koper

Decades of evaluation research direct us to a range of proactive strategies that police could carry out when not answering calls for service to better manage risks for crime and other social harms and to engage with their communities [see reviews by National Academies of Sciences (NAS), 2018; National Research Council, 2004]. Such proactivity might include targeted visibility in high-crime places, problem-solving activities to reduce disorder and sustain crime prevention gains, focused deterrence on high-risk offenders, or community engagement activities that improve trust, confidence, and information exchange with community members.

In practice, however, police are not always using their uncommitted time in evidence-based or proactive ways, and the scope of everyday proactivity is much more limited (Koper et al., 2020; Lum et al., 2020). Notably, police in the United States regularly default to traffic enforcement activities as their predominant way of being proactive. The reasons for this are many: There is a great deal of agency infrastructure for traffic enforcement (e.g., academy and field training, ticketing forms, rules, and tracking); officers are naturally on the road and in their vehicles and can easily detect and see traffic violations; and a great deal of calls for service by citizens focus on traffic and vehicle issues. Meanwhile, other types of proactive activities advocated in research (e.g., community engagement, problem-solving, situational crime prevention approaches) are infrequently conducted or recorded. Taken together, studies have documented a continuous gap between research evidence and everyday practices—a gap that is sustained by a lack of adequate organizational infrastructures (e.g., tracking, evaluation, and reward mechanisms) in support of evidence-based practices (Lum & Koper, 2017).

The frequent use of traffic enforcement by the police as the main form of proactivity raises several questions from an evidence-based perspective. Importantly, if used so regularly, does traffic enforcement effectively address public safety outcomes such as traffic violations, vehicle crashes, and crime? Traffic encounters have also been found to result in racial disparities in policing outcomes, greater risks for officers using force, and negative effects on police legitimacy. Even if traffic stops can provide a useful tool for police to mitigate community problems when used properly, officers in the field often receive little guidance on when, where, and how best to practice them in ways that do not lead to disparate outcomes. A series of studies conducted by the authors and others at the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy have generated new evidence in this area.

Traffic Enforcement and Patrol Deployment

Traffic enforcement is a highly visible proactive activity that can generate both specific and general deterrence by increasing perceived police presence and apprehension risk. The prevalent use of traffic stops by law enforcement has been justified primarily on two accounts—traffic safety and crime control (Wu & Lum, 2019). Police commonly use traffic enforcement in their everyday patrolling and in the course of special traffic initiatives to proactively address risk-driving behaviors and recurring traffic safety problems. Additionally, traffic stops have been more broadly used as a crime control measure to increase officer visibility and apprehension risk at crime hot spots (McGarrell et al., 2001) or to seek out contraband such as firearms or drugs (Gross & Barnes, 2002; Sherman et al., 1995). Known as "pretextual" stops, traffic stops for purposes of criminal investigation, while deemed constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court, are often criticized for disproportionately targeting minority communities (Engel & Calnon, 2004; Epp et al., 2014; Fagan & Davies, 2000; Farrell & McDevitt, 2006; Warren et al., 2006).

Research suggests that when used in targeted, procedurally just ways and combined with other approaches, traffic enforcement activities can be effective in reducing certain types of crime. Notably, results from a number of field experiments indicate that targeted

traffic enforcement helps to reduce gun carrying and gun violence in gun crime hot spots (see review by Koper & Mayo-Wilson, 2012; see also Rosenfeld et al., 2014). This deterrent effect, however, is not consistently seen for other types of crime problems (see Weiss & Freels, 1996).

Aside from its effects on crime, intensified traffic enforcement activities can also reduce certain risky driving behaviors that are known to contribute to serious vehicle crashes. For example, programs targeting driving under the influence (DUI) through media campaigns, coupled with intensified enforcement and greater use of sobriety checkpoints and breathalyzer equipment, can reduce vehicle crashes in which alcohol or other substances are involved (see reviews by Erke et al., 2009, and Goss et al., 2008; see also Fell, 2019). Police can also curb speeding and reckless driving behaviors through targeted, intensified speeding enforcement programs (de Waard & Rooijers, 1994; Holland & Conner, 1996; Sirega, 2018). In practice, these programs are commonly implemented by designated units or officers as a crackdown intervention to temporarily interrupt trends of vehicle crashes associated with these specific factors.

More recently, research findings highlighting the geographic concentration of crime and traffic accidents at specific and similar places have led to the development of strategies to better tackle these problems with everyday resources (see Carter & Piza, 2018; Wu & Lum, 2019). One of the most well-known examples is the Data-Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS) program, developed by a partnership between the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the National Institute of Justice. The program is rooted in the idea that by targeting microlocations where traffic accidents and crime co-concentrate through heightened visibility and traffic enforcement (components that are commonly seen in everyday police proactivity), police can reduce both simultaneously (Burch & Geraci, 2009; Kerrigan, 2011; NHTSA, 2013; Wilson, 2010).

This idea has gained traction among practitioners particularly as traffic enforcement activities and location-based patrol are already an integral part of what police do in their daily work. Indeed, police spend much of their uncommitted time patrolling locations with perceived high risks for criminal and traffic violations, much resembling the DDACTS idea (Wu & Lum, 2017; 2019). Rigorous evaluations of DDACTS or similar approaches, however, are scarce and have produced mixed results. Overall, those interventions that combine intensified, high-visibility traffic enforcement activities with community-oriented and problem-solving approaches seem more likely to succeed than those focused solely on enforcement (Beck, 2010; Bryant et al., 2015; Weiss & Freels, 1996). Nonetheless, these evaluative studies have often focused on special and temporary operations (including tactics like sobriety checkpoints) that are exceptional to everyday practices and may not be sustained for long periods. There is arguably a need to generate more evidence about the effects of everyday traffic enforcement and to develop strategies that target these efforts in the most efficient, strategic, and sustainable ways.

Traffic Studies by the CEBCP

New studies by the CEBCP are advancing this area in numerous ways. In one recent study (not yet published), for example, we examined the impacts of everyday patrol and traffic enforcement at hot

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spots of crime and vehicle crashes in a local suburban agency over a period of one year. We found that these regular levels of activity do help to reduce crashes at the most serious crash hot spots, but they have less impact elsewhere. Besides targeting, the dosages and types of proactive activities also matter to the efficacy of everyday proactivity in preventing crashes and crime. Routine traffic enforcement activities tend to be short-term oriented, meaning that police often elevate their efforts at a location in response to recent events (like recent crashes or crime), but they do not typically maintain optimal patrol and enforcement levels over time. These inadequacies in targeting and dosage thus undermine the ability of police to generate sustained, optimal deterrence on deviant behaviors. More knowledge is also needed about the types of traffic accidents that can be most impacted by a deterrence-based strategy. For example, inattentiveness or lack of awareness of surroundings can contribute to many roadway accidents but might not respond to police deterrence efforts.

Other CEBCP research efforts are providing further insight into optimal strategies for traffic safety. In our recent partnership with the Iowa State Patrol, we evaluated their Fatality Reduction Enforcement Effort (FREE), an innovative, evidence-based program to reduce vehicle crashes in rural areas by reducing problem driving behaviors that contribute greatly to serious crashes, including driving under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, speeding, distracted driving, and failure to wear a seatbelt. Based on a problem-solving framework, the program concentrates on changing driving behaviors and routines at hot spot road segments for crashes and at major towns that are activity hot spots and likely origin points for drivers involved in crashes. Officers conduct intermittent, high-visibility patrols in these locations. Within the towns, they also make preventive community contacts to stress safety messages at locations such as bars, restaurants, gas stations, and convenience stores. These activities are intended to promote deterrence, community engagement, and police legitimacy while also addressing the broader opportunity structures and routines that contribute to vehicle crashes (see Clary, 2018, for an earlier description of the FREE program in this magazine). Preliminary results from a new CEBCP evaluation suggest that the FREE program has promise as a strategy for reducing vehicle crashes, particularly those stemming from dangerous driving behaviors like speeding and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol (Koper et al., 2021). More generally, these results suggest that a problem-oriented, community-focused approach that addresses the underlying risk factors contributing to repeated vehicle crashes may fare better than a general, deterrence-oriented approach.

Finally, practitioners should be cautious about the community ramifications of engaging in widespread traffic enforcement activities. As mentioned above, there is a large body of literature raising concerns that proactive traffic enforcement may be implemented in ways that result in racial and ethnic disparities. Our analysis of long-term traffic citation data in partnership with the Alexandria (Virginia) Police Department (APD) illustrates this point, while also highlighting the difficulty in understanding why racial and ethnic disparities are generated from traffic enforcement (Lum & Wu, 2017). We used several benchmarking methods to examine the APD traffic data and found some evidence of disparity in certain types of enforcement efforts or ticketing types. At the same time, it was unclear how such disparities were generated. For example, disparities in traffic enforcement across racial and ethnic groups could result from implicit or explicit biases of officers, decisions about where and what time to conduct traffic enforcement, real differences in violations across population groups, or a combination or intersectionality of any of these factors. From an evidence-based perspective, the goal is to simultaneously detect and mitigate disparities that arise from police behavior, biases, or decision-making *and* ensure that traffic enforcement leads to safety outcomes. Both goals require accountability to more detailed data being collected in traffic stops, stronger first-line supervision of officers' daily activities, and regular outcome assessments of those activities.

Conclusion

Although used regularly, proactive traffic enforcement is only one type of tool available to officers for preventing crime, traffic violations, and vehicle accidents. But like all proactive police activities, these practices are often not well deployed. Specifically, the spatial and temporal targeting of traffic enforcement efforts as well as their dosages need careful assessment and calibration to not only optimize their effects but minimize their negative unintended consequences (i.e., disparity, reduction in police legitimacy, declines in officer safety). Agencies not only should reconsider where, when, and why they use traffic stops so frequently, but at the same time, consider other alternatives that may work better (e.g., problem-solving, focused deterrence, community engagement, environmental adjustments, etc.).

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Hot Off the Press

Recent Publications by Faculty and Students at the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy

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