

Translational Criminology

FALL 2021

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

FEATURING

A TRUTH SERUM FOR YOUR PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON
FACIAL RECOGNITION SOFTWARE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

WESTED-CEBCP 2021 CONVERSATION SERIES, PART II:
MITIGATING DISPARITIES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE

THE 2022 CEBCP ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM—
RETURNING TO EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME POLICY:
EVIDENCE MATTERS

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF DEPLOYING BODY-WORN CAMERAS
ON NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

GETTING INNOVATIVE IN SAVANNAH: THE DEVELOPMENT OF
A PRACTITIONER-RESEARCHER PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN A
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REACTIONS FROM THE FIELD:
CAN WE REALLY DEFUND THE POLICE?

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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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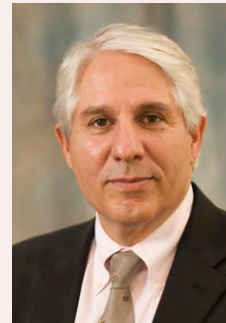
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FROM THE DIRECTORS

We begin with our most exciting news: We are thrilled to bring back the CEBCP in-person symposium on June 27, 2022! The theme of the 2022 CEBCP symposium will be “Returning to Evidence-Based Crime Policy: Evidence Matters.” In part, this theme reflects our return to our symposium and other synergistic activities that since 2008 we have collectively enjoyed with all of you. But the theme also reflects our continued commitment to CEBCP’s mission: to make scientific research a key component in decisions about crime and justice policies and stress the importance of objective knowledge to inform contemporary justice challenges.

It is easy to dwell on how our society and criminal justice systems have become more polarized and contentious than ever before. The past decade, and the last two years in particular, have been marked by significant calls for reform and the questioning of the legitimacy of our justice institutions. The COVID pandemic was both a lens and agitator for these debates, concerns, and questions about justice policies and practices. As people, we certainly have our views about these matters. But as scientists, our role remains steadfast: to use appropriate and rigorous scientific methods to analyze information, discover and explore phenomena, and understand causal links. These goals must also include constantly questioning our own biases and perspectives and how they might influence our work. What we hope for and what we find out about the nature of crime, the impact of interventions, or the consequences of reforms or new technologies may not always align, and this can be a source of anxiety. But our job is to report the information as we discover it.

Our commitment to scientifically sound crime and justice policies and practices will be reflected in the symposium, where we will explore the evidence behind contemporary reforms. This commitment is also reflected in this issue of *Translational Criminology*. For example, Anthony Braga continues to add to the national conversation on body-worn cameras, discussing the results of the court-ordered evaluation of the NYPD body-worn camera pilot program that he and colleagues conducted. We also report with Anthony Petrosino of WestEd on the second in the WestEd-CEBCP discussion series on whether racial and ethnic disparities can be



mitigated in juvenile justice. Cynthia Rudin and Shawn Bushway discuss facial recognition and the use of artificial intelligence in criminal justice, raising several questions that need more research. Chad Posick and Matthew Breedon also describe the “life course” of their research-practice partnership, showcasing an anchoring theme of the magazine: illustrating and describing the use of research in practice. We also asked three criminal justice leaders to provide their reactions to CEBCP’s nine-agency study on citizen calls for service (conducted by Lum, Koper, and Wu) in the context of calls to “defund” or reimagine the roles of policing in the U.S.

We look forward to continuing these and many other conversations with you at the 2022 symposium. Thank you all for your continued support and interest in evidence-based crime policy.

Cynthia Lum
Director and Editor of *Translational Criminology*

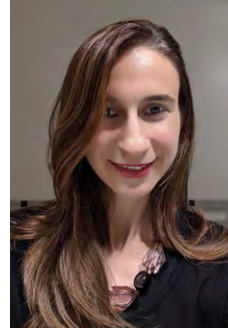
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A Truth Serum for your Personal Perspective on Facial Recognition Software in Law Enforcement

BY CYNTHIA RUDIN AND SHAWN BUSHWAY

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Cynthia Rudin



Shawn Bushway

A great deal has been written on the negative effects of facial recognition on society. We've seen IBM, Amazon, and other companies place a moratorium on facial recognition development. We've also seen wrongful arrests of Black people in the US and persecution of the Uighurs in China as a result of this technology. Many people have already decided whether they think facial recognition technology development should be banned. But facial recognition technology is much more complex when considering the latest science and empirical evidence of this technology.

Let's start with an interesting example. We know that some (but not all) facial recognition algorithms can be racially biased, meaning that they are less accurate for minority groups. At the same time, facial recognition has been shown to be a useful tool. For example, facial recognition can help us identify posted images of victims of child sex trafficking on the internet light years faster than any human could manually. In fact, it has been one of the most essential tools available to combat human trafficking, saving tens of thousands of children from further victimization.¹ Even if a facial recognition system can identify White faces more accurately than Black, Hispanic, or Asian faces (not all facial recognition systems are biased like this), its use for the fight against human trafficking could surprisingly lead to an overall benefit to Blacks, Hispanics, Asians -- more than Whites -- if there were more people from these racial groups being trafficked. In other words, even if the technology is biased *against* certain racial groups, its benefit may be biased *towards* these same groups.

This example hints at the complexity of the issues at stake. The potential uses of facial recognition technology are very broad. Using facial recognition to combat human trafficking, investigate crimes, or surveil communities, each has different concerns, and distinguishing between these uses is critical.

For Forensics, Facial Recognition is Just Another Forensic Feature Comparison Tool

The use of facial recognition for forensics has been common in the US for some time. Using visual images to identify whether an individual might be linked to a crime (as either victim or offender) is one example of a particular forensic technique known as a *forensic feature-comparison method*. A forensic feature comparison is a procedure by which an examiner seeks to determine whether an evidentiary sample (e.g., from a crime scene) is associated with a source sample (e.g., from a suspect) based on similar features. The evidentiary sample might be DNA, hair, fingerprints, bitemarks, toolmarks, bullets, tire tracks, voiceprints, visual images, and so on². Within this classification, we include the use of photographs or videos from a surveillance or phone camera at the scene of the crime, as well as the review of the photos of victims of human trafficking that might be posted on pornographic or prostitution websites.

All of these techniques have examples of misidentification like those that have come to light recently for facial recognition software (e.g., the cases of Robert Williams, Michael Oliver, and Nijer Parks³). The Williams case exemplifies a classic example of a poor application of a forensic technique. The software misidentified him, and officers didn't check the identification manually before arresting him (i.e., they didn't follow best practice). These types of errors - tool error and application error - are two basic types of mistakes. Recent scientific scrutiny of these forensic approaches has made significant progress in

1 See <https://www.wired.com/story/how-facial-recognition-fighting-child-sex-trafficking/>.

2 President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology. (2016). *Forensic Science in Criminal Courts: Ensuring Scientific Validity of Feature-Comparison Methods*. Washington, DC: Executive Office of the President. (Report available at: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/PCAST/pcast_forensic_science_report_final.pdf).

3 See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/04/13/facial-recognition-false-arrest-lawsuit/>.



understanding how these approaches came to be used in the criminal justice system and how they can be improved [PCast].

The good news is that we now have stronger scientific consensus about the kinds of evidence that can support the use of these technologies. The recent report by the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology⁴ identified the important criteria. Specifically, to meet the scientific criteria of foundational validity, two key elements are required:

- (1) a reproducible and consistent procedure for (a) identifying features within evidence samples; (b) comparing the features in two samples; and (c) determining, based on the similarity between the features in two samples, whether the samples should be declared to be a proposed identification (“matching rule”).
- 2) empirical measurements, from multiple independent studies, of (a) the method’s false positive rate—that is, the probability it declares a proposed identification between samples that come from different sources and (b) the method’s sensitivity—that is, probability that it declares a proposed identification between samples that come from the same source.

Based on this evidence, some tools, like bitemark comparison methods, probably do not have sufficient evidence to support continued use. Part of this is because it is too subjective, and partly because of the nature of the evidence. We can, and should, expose

⁴ See footnote 2.

facial recognition software to the same tests. Our current read of the evidence is that some types of facial recognition software will perform quite well relative to most existing forensic techniques, and will pass any objective performance standard. The best of the available tools, for example, are quite accurate, and do not exhibit the kinds of racial bias that often makes the news. Again, this does not mean that there will not be errors or that we need not develop rules of best practice. It does mean that facial recognition software compares well with other techniques currently in use in the criminal justice system in this particular regard. Recognizing facial recognition as one type of forensic feature comparison tool helps to place the tool in its proper context, especially for crimes—like human trafficking—that could benefit from it. We believe the benefits of facial recognition far outweigh the negatives, especially if best practices for applying the tool are established.

As a side note, low-resolution surveillance video can often never be used for facial recognition. This is because we now know that a low-resolution image could exactly correspond to many very realistic high-resolution images⁵. In this case, the algorithm should declare itself uncertain rather than trying to find a match. In our view, this

⁵ Menon, S., Damian, A., Hu, S., Ravi, N. & Rudin, C. (2020). PULSE: Self-Supervised Photo Upsampling via Latent Space Exploration of Generative Models. Proceedings of the IEEE/CVF Conference on Computer Vision and Pattern Recognition (CVPR), 2437-2445.

type of condition is normal for this kind of technology. For example, similar caveats exist for partial fingerprints or a low-quality DNA sample.

Facial Recognition for Mass Surveillance

Many concerns about facial recognition software are about its use by the criminal justice system outside of the standard crime-solving, feature-comparison paradigm. Examples would be the use of facial recognition software on body-worn cameras by police officers. Much like license plate readers, such technology would expose anyone in a public space to scrutiny for detection and apprehension without probable cause. The most shocking examples of mass surveillance that we know of are attributed to the Chinese government. There have been reports⁶ that facial recognition has been used to identify Uighurs by their distinctive facial characteristics to place them into concentration camps. Other reports⁷ claim that facial recognition is being used to humiliate and bully citizens who do not conform to a specific dress code. These examples are extreme, but our civil liberties (and safety) could be threatened if our whereabouts could at any time be known to any government or adversary. The concerns about mass surveillance associated with facial recognition software are serious. Still, it is critical to separate these uses from more standard uses discussed previously. Confusing the two issues could result in the loss of a valuable tool for investigations.

Privacy Creates a Tug-of-War Between Forensics and Mass Surveillance

The one area where the two possible uses of facial recognition -- feature comparison and mass surveillance -- collide involves the question of the possible data sources that law enforcement can use to identify a person. Once someone obtains a clear image from a crime scene or crime-associated website, that image must be compared with an available database. The comparison data was traditionally limited to samples drawn from individuals convicted of crimes with fingerprints or DNA samples. Recently, this line has begun to blur; fingerprints may be drawn from background checks, and DNA samples from genealogical websites are being accessed to identify

6 See <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/china-puts-uighurs-uyghurs-muslim-children-in-prison-re-education-internment-camps-vice-news/>.

7 See <https://www.cnet.com/news/chinese-city-uses-surveillance-tech-to-shame-citizens-for-wearing-pajamas-outside/>; <https://www.cnet.com/news/in-china-facial-recognition-public-shaming-and-control-go-hand-in-hand/>.



suspects. These new uses have evoked real concern, and the same concerns apply to facial recognition. Databases of faces could be limited to known offenders or could also be expanded to much more extensive data sources, including those gathered from the internet and driver's license databases. We think additional research and advocacy should include a discussion of the relevant databases that criminal justice agencies can access and search after they have acquired an image from a crime.

Racial Bias, Privacy and their Tradeoff

The choice of allowable data also has implications for racial bias. There is a direct relationship between the amount of data used to train a facial recognition system and its accuracy. This relationship holds for all racial groups. For example, Clearview AI trained its system by downloading 2.8-billion (publicly available) images from Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn⁸, etc., all without user permission. Clearly, the people posting those images did not post them to be consolidated into a biometrics database for training facial recognition software. There are some laws guarding the collection and storage of biometric data (e.g., fingerprints, images of faces), particularly in Illinois⁹, where Facebook has been sued for violating biometric privacy laws. A serious problem with biometric databases is that if

8 See <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/18/technology/clearview-privacy-facial-recognition.html>; <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/03/18/magazine/facial-recognition-clearview-ai.html>.

9 See <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/illinois-facebook-users-can-now-file-claims-for-payoffs-in-650-million-lawsuit-settlement/2342967/>.

they are leaked or hacked, it could lead to irreparable damage to the people whose data is in the database (rather than to the company developing it).

Thus, in our cost-benefit analysis, if we want our facial recognition systems to be more accurate, we must realize that this would come at a cost of sharing our biometric data. If we could prevent companies like Clearview AI from using our photos for training their facial recognition software (and indeed, proposals are working their way through Congress to do this¹⁰). This means these companies would have much less data to train from, leading to a less accurate model. Since minority groups won't be heavily represented in the database, the model is likely to be less accurate for them -- that is, more racially biased. Therein lies the tradeoff between privacy and racial bias: less training data leads to more privacy but probably also more racial bias. The most accurate models, such as Clearview AI, have been reported to have little to no discernable racial bias¹¹.

For a security system built around biometric data, one might ask what data would be used to train it, who has access to its use, and how its data is used. An interesting case along these lines is that of the Lockport School system¹² that had invested in a facial recognition security system after the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, but was forced to scrap it before implementation based on a moratorium on facial recognition by New York's governor (Cuomo). That system would have stored data about students, staff, and visitors for 60 days (a typical amount of time for storing security footage, and over 80% of schools already have security cameras¹³). The difference from classic security footage is that Lockport's system automatically compares each person entering the school to a set of known sex offenders and others who have been identified as a threat. The system was highly precise, with an over 99% valid match rate, and passed checks for racial bias. Given the very high stakes involved in a school shooting (along with the reasonable possibility of such a catastrophic event occurring), the use of such systems may become more common soon.

We remark here that panicked reports urging a complete moratorium on facial recognition in schools seem to conflate the terms "facial recognition" (recognizing a face in an image) with "pervasive surveillance" (placing cameras everywhere, and using them for

applications beyond school security). These are wildly different concepts and should not be confused¹⁴. These reports make the obvious point that security footage of students and staff should not be sold and monetized, just as police body-worn camera footage should not be capitalized upon. Raw video footage that is sold could later be fed into facial recognition software, leading again to mass surveillance.

Realities

The algorithms for performing face recognition are publicly available and easily used by data scientists. Many researchers specializing in AI, machine learning, and/or statistics, would consider building a classification system to be fairly easy. We cannot ban the algorithms themselves - machine learning classifiers are now basic statistics and

machine learning tools. It is the data that creates the possibility of building facial recognition tools, and huge sources of labeled photographs are already in the public domain. Given these realities, we suggest that it is important to separate the use of facial recognition for forensics (where standards have been developing over many years) and mass surveillance. For mass surveillance, standards need to be developed on what data are permissible for searches by law enforcement. This choice of data often, but not always, creates a tradeoff with privacy and racial bias, and we must be careful to understand when this will happen and what the

consequences might be. As we pointed out, there can be counterintuitive cases where sometimes biased software can still serve important purposes, even unequally benefitting the population that this software might be biased against. Further, sometimes facial recognition does not require an invasion of privacy inherent to the surveillance itself; a person cannot be identified if they are not in the database. It is also important not to conflate facial recognition with the number of cameras in use, which seems to be a common misunderstanding. We hope that by disentangling these complex issues, we can help those on both sides to find common ground.

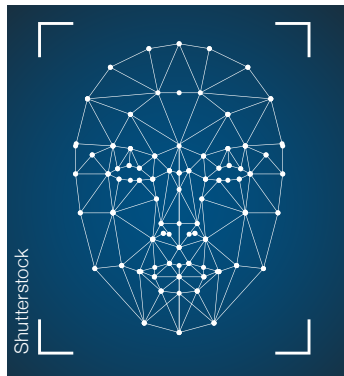
14 Galligan, C., Rosenfeld, H., Kleinman, M., & Parthasarathy, S. (2020). Cameras in the Classroom: Facial Recognition Technology in Schools. Executive Summary. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Science, Technology, and Public Policy Program.

10 See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/04/21/data-surveillance-bill/>.

11 Grother, P., Ngan, M., Hanaoka, K. (2019). Face Recognition Vendor Test (FRVT) Part 3: Demographic Effects. Internal Report (No. 8280) to the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Washington, DC: US Department of Commerce.

12 See <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/carolinehaskins1/new-york-stops-school-facial-recognition>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/06/business/facial-recognition-schools.html>.

13 See <https://www.besafe.net/news/11-things-about-school-security-cameras/>.



WestEd-CEBCP 2021 Conversation Series, Part II: Mitigating Disparities in Juvenile Justice

BY ANTHONY PETROSINO, CYNTHIA LUM, AND DANIELLE MUNGUIA

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Anthony Petrosino



Cynthia Lum



Danielle Munguia

The juvenile justice system is experiencing a transformation. Federal data from the Department of Justice indicate that there has been a steep decline of about 60% in youths confined in juvenile justice settings compared to 20 years ago. While the U.S. still locks up more young people than any other developed nation, this decline came after a long period of expansion. Many across different ideological and political spectrums have welcomed this recent decline. A large body of research indicates that not only do most juvenile delinquents age out of crime (Farrington, Moffitt), but young people have much better life outcomes when they steer clear of the justice system (e.g., Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosino & Guckenburg, 2010). In addition, diversionary or community-based alternatives are much cheaper than formally processing and detaining youth in juvenile justice facilities (e.g., Petrosino, Fronius, & Zimiles, forthcoming).

Despite the decline in the use of juvenile confinement and the evidence-base for alternative, the racial and ethnic disparities that we witnessed and were concerned about 20 years ago have persisted. For example, the U.S. Department of Justice census data indicates that Native and Indigenous youth are twice as likely to be living in a juvenile facility as white youth. Black youth are four times as likely, and



the rate of Latina/o youth residing in juvenile facilities is 42% higher than for white youth.

Not surprisingly, these disparities exist across other systems outside of juvenile justice, including in school discipline. The use of out-of-school suspension and other punishments has been found

by researchers to be associated with a series of negative outcomes for young people, including greater contact with the justice system. Again, most observers would be encouraged that the overall number of youths being suspended is dropping, according to federal data from the U.S. Department of Education. But racial and ethnic disparities continue to persist. For example, Black and Native/Indigenous children are expelled at three times the rate of White students. Black girls are four times more likely than White girls to be suspended. Perhaps most alarmingly, these disparities begin in preschool with suspension and expulsion decisions.

These are only some of the many data points that exist that underscore the racial and ethnic disparities that impact juveniles and the justice system. Few would dispute these data. However, a critical question for policy and practice is not simply whether disparities exist but whether they can be mitigated or reduced. Are these the entrenched manifestations of a long history of systematic or institutional racism across many systems (health, education, justice, housing) that are impervious to intervention? Or, are there demonstrated successes in moving the needle to reduce such disparities?

To answer these questions, George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy and WestEd's Justice & Prevention Research Center joined forces to launch a special conversation series in 2021 to bring attention to what research can tell us about mitigating racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system. Entitled *Mitigating Disparities in the Justice System*, our first event in January focused on whether police training could accomplish this goal (see the article about this event in the Spring 2021 issue of *Translational Criminology Magazine*). Our second event in June examined juvenile justice and is highlighted here. We invited three prominent policy and research experts to discuss disparities in the juvenile justice and school discipline systems and highlight strategies that are effective in addressing them.



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The panel included Sean Darling-Hammond, WestEd researcher and founder of BITJustice; Nancy Rodriguez, professor of Criminology at the University of California, Irvine and former Director of the U.S. National Institute of Justice; and David Muhammad, Executive Director of the National Institute of Criminal Justice Reform. System and school-based strategies to impact juvenile justice disparities were discussed, and we summarize some of the highlights here. The webinar can be viewed at <https://www.wested.org/resources/mitigating-racial-and-ethnic-disparities-in-juvenile-justice/>.



Sean Darling Hammond

improving and repairing relationships.” For example, instead of excluding a student through suspension when they misbehave, restorative practices guide students through processes that help them understand the harm caused by their actions, repair that harm (and rebuild relationships), and take steps to avoid making similar

Darling-Hammond presented research centered around mitigating disparities in school discipline through direct change in school systems. Specifically, he discussed whether exposure to restorative practices can ensure at-risk students feel connected to school environments; and help them sidestep exclusionary discipline and juvenile involvement. He defined restorative practices “as an alternative to punishment and exclusion wherein the focus is on

mistakes in the future. Darling-Hammond underscored that there is evidence that restorative practices can bridge racial disparities and reduce the use of exclusionary student discipline in schools. In a review of quantitative research Darling-Hammond led (Darling-Hammond, et al. 2020), the findings showed that restorative practices did reduce the discipline gap between White and Black students in several studies. Although research suggests potential benefits of restorative practices, Darling-Hammond pointed out that exposure to these practices is the lowest amongst many groups that receive the most negative disciplinary experiences: Black students, Latina/o/x students, and economically disadvantaged students. To resolve this, Darling-Hammond recommended increasing access to restorative practices by ensuring that administrators and educators that serve more Black, Latina/o/x, and low-income students receive training, consistent coaching, and support to implement restorative practices.



Nancy Rodriguez

Professor Rodriguez discussed how disparities begin to emerge early in system contact, and how this may be a critical point of mitigation. She specifically highlighted how perceptions and attitudes of court officials can influence decision-making in the form of implicit biases about Black, Latina/o, and Native/Indigenous youth. Rodriguez classified these biases as stemming from internal or external

attributes. Internal attributes are characteristics that youth possess that decision-makers classify as undesirable and "disruptive" (e.g., negative moral attitudes or personality traits, greater likelihood of reoffending). External attributes are characteristics of the youth's family, school performance, and peer influence. These also reinforce decisions by officials to detain ethnic

youth and expose them to more severe punitive outcomes. The weight given by officials to these internal and external attributes can decrease the likelihood of certain youth receiving diversion or avoiding formal systems involvement. For example, officials may perceive family dysfunction in Black, Latina/o, or Indigenous families as being so great that youth need to be removed from the home to an out-of-home placement. Rodriguez discussed how these biases over internal and external attributes accumulate for the same youth over multiple settings and over time, further increasing inequality through a process referred to as cumulative disadvantage. She cited research that demonstrated disparities for the two central pathways for youth in the juvenile justice system: disparities are more pronounced for youth who receive detention than non-detention. And it is Black, Latina/o, and Native/Indigenous youth who are more likely to be on the detention pathway than their white counterparts. Rodriguez concluded by calling for more research to address the disparities in disciplinary actions for ethnic youth involved in the juvenile system.



David Muhammad

Muhammad also discussed the increasing demand for juvenile justice facilities to be eradicated or remodeled into environments that foster positive youth development to establish more effective disciplinary actions for judicially involved youth. As a society, we spend a lot of



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money on detaining youth (astronomical amounts in some states). Muhammad advises that we can address this by reducing the size of youth involved in the system, improving the quality of care that juveniles experience within the system by focusing on positive youth development, and reinvesting the funds that we were willing to use to incarcerate youth into promoting community and family development.

Future Conversations

The CEBCP and WestEd are planning a third event to continue the conversation about mitigating disparities in the criminal justice system in the future. We hope this series sparks debate and discussion in the field. However, one important conclusion of our first two events is apparent: Despite research identifying disparities in the justice system, there is very little research evaluating interventions, programs, laws, and policies intended to mitigate, reduce, and prevent those disparities. Building this evidence-base will be an critical step to informing the debates and activities in the current justice reform environment.

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Evan Cantwell

Evaluating the Impact of Deploying Body-Worn Cameras on New York City Police Department Officers¹

BY ANTHONY A. BRAGA, JOHN M. MACDONALD,
JAMES MCCABE, PETER ZIMROTH, AND RICHARD JEROME

Anthony Braga is Jerry Lee Professor of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. *John MacDonald* is Professor of Criminology and Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. *James McCabe* is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice at Sacred Heart University. *Peter Zimroth* and *Richard Jerome* are the court-appointed monitor and deputy monitor, respectively, in the *Floyd, Ligon, and Davis* litigation.

The 2013 federal court remedial order in the New York City stop, question, and frisk case, *Floyd et al. v. City of New York*, noted the potential benefits of outfitting New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers with body-worn cameras. Those possible benefits included creating objective records of stop and frisk encounters, encouraging lawful and respectful police-citizen interactions, alleviating mistrust between the NYPD and the public, and offering a way to help determine the validity of accusations of police misconduct. The court order directed the NYPD to work with the court-appointed independent monitor to conduct a one-year pilot program and randomized experimental evaluation to determine whether the body-worn cameras yielded the desired impacts, and whether the program should be expanded or terminated. The monitor was charged with measuring the effectiveness of the cameras on a range of outcomes measures including the reduction of unconstitutional stops and frisks. The court-ordered body-worn camera pilot program and accompanying evaluation was initiated in April 2017.

This article briefly summarizes the research design, results, and conclusions drawn from the evaluation of the court-ordered evaluation of the NYPD body-worn camera pilot program.

Research Design

The main evaluation design involved the development of a cluster randomized controlled trial. In summary, 40 precincts with the highest numbers of Citizen Complaint Review Board (CCRB) complaints against NYPD officers were identified and then matched into 20 pairs based on demographics, socio-economic characteristics, crime and police activity. Care was taken to ensure that the officers in each precinct pair were also similar in terms of demographics, length of service, rank, and number of citizen complaints. Within each pair, one precinct was randomly assigned to have cameras (the treatment precinct) and the other was assigned to be without cameras (the control precinct). Uniformed officers working the third platoon (3:00 PM to midnight shift) and plainclothes officers working Anti-Crime Unit assignments in the treatment precincts were required to wear the body cameras for one year.

The cluster randomized controlled trial of the body-worn camera pilot measured the impact of the presence of cameras using four sets of outcome measures: civility of police-citizen interactions, policing activity, police lawfulness, and police-community relations. Except for police-community relations metrics, the data for the study's outcome measures were collected through official data systems of the NYPD and the Civilian Complaint Review Board. The primary analyses of these outcomes for the treatment and control groups compared data from the 12 months before and after the deployment

¹ The authors of this article currently serve on the federal monitoring committee on the settlement agreements in *Floyd et al. v. City of New York, et al.*, 08 Civ. 1034 (AT), *Ligon, et al., v. City of New York, et al.*, 12-CV-2274 (AT), and *Davis et al., v. City of New York, et al.*, 10-CV-00699 (AT). The analyses and opinions expressed in the article reflect those of the authors only and not any other entity. The work reported in this article was funded by the City of New York as part of the settlement agreements. The full technical report is available at <http://nypdmonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/12th-Report.pdf>





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of body-worn cameras in each treatment precinct.

To conduct the surveys, the monitor brought on two organizations, Hart Research Associates and the City University of New York (CUNY) Institute for State and Local Governance (ISLG). Hart Research Associates conducted a telephone survey of residents in the 20 treatment precincts and the 20 control precincts. Recognizing that the persons most impacted by past NYPD stop and frisk activities, particularly young minority men, are not always easy to reach in telephone surveys, the monitor team also assigned the CUNY ISLG to conduct a more targeted in-person survey in five treatment and five control precincts.

Results

The main results of the experimental analyses included:

- The deployment of body-worn cameras was associated with a statistically significant 38.8% increase in the number of stop reports completed by treatment officers and a statistically significant 21.1% reduction in the CCRB complaints made against treatment officers relative to control officers. The increase in stop reports appears to be driven by more documentation of stops rather than a rise in the number of stops made by NYPD officers equipped with body-worn cameras.
- The implementation of body-worn cameras was not associated with any statistically significant changes in the number of arrests, arrests with force, summonses, domestic incident reports, and citizen crime complaint reports when officers in the treatment precincts were compared to officers in the control precincts.

- Subjects were frisked in similar shares of treatment stops recorded by body-worn cameras and unrecorded control stops (67.1% v. 63.2%, respectively). However, subjects in treatment stops recorded by body-worn cameras relative to unrecorded control stops were significantly less likely to be searched (26.6% v. 38.9%, respectively), arrested (21.1% v. 31.8%, respectively), and summonsed (1.0% v. 3.9%, respectively). These results suggest that, relative to control officers, officers wearing body cameras increased their documentation of stops that did not involve additional enforcement actions.
- When reviewed by the monitor team, the justifications reported by officers in stop reports for stopping citizens were less likely to be regarded as lawful when officers wore a body-worn camera relative to officers in the control group who were not wearing cameras (66.8% v. 78.9%). In stops involving a frisk, the frisk was less likely to be judged by the monitor team as constitutional when compared to frisks conducted by officers not wearing cameras (85.0% v. 94.0%). In stop reports involving a search, the search was somewhat less likely to be judged by the monitor team as constitutional when compared to searches conducted by officers not wearing cameras (85.7% v. 94.4%). These results suggest that officers wearing cameras were more likely to document questionable stops compared to officers not wearing cameras.
- Analyses of telephone surveys and in-person community surveys taken in treatment and control precincts before and after the deployment of body cameras did not find any meaningful differences in resident perceptions of the police.

Conclusion

Similar to the findings of other body-worn camera evaluations¹, the results of this study suggest that the deployment of body-worn cameras reduced complaints against NYPD officers. A recent CCRB report suggests that deployment of BWCs on NYPD officers supports civilian oversight by reducing the time needed to investigate complaints, helping in the determination of what happened in the police-civilian encounter, and increasing the share of cases being closed with a disposition of substantiated, unfounded, or exonerated rather than being closed because the facts could not be sufficiently determined². However, the deployment of body-worn cameras did not reduce use of force during arrests.

Concerning community perceptions, in the short term, the adoption of body cameras did not change community perceptions of the NYPD in precincts that received the technology relative to precincts that did not receive the technology. The short-term adoption of body-worn cameras may not have been a powerful enough change over a long enough time period to generate a meaningful shift in durable resident perceptions of the NYPD. Nevertheless, there is strong support among NYC residents to outfit NYPD officers with body cameras and an expectation to view videos of controversial police-citizen encounters when these events occur³. Given the demonstrated benefits and absence of harmful outcomes, this study supports not only the use of body-worn cameras by the NYPD, but their use by other departments as well.

A key finding of this study was that the BWC treatment officers generated nearly 39% more stop reports when compared to non-BWC control officers over the course of the experiment. The BWCs did not produce any other changes in NYPD officer policing activity. As part of the agreed-upon reforms in the Floyd settlement, the NYPD implemented a series of changes to move away from the excessive use of stop and frisk activities to control crime. As such, it seems unlikely that NYPD officers would be inspired to conduct more stops of citizens on video as part of crime control strategy or view their discretion to not stop citizens as limited because of the technology. On the contrary, the increased number of stop reports seems to be an artifact of the surveillance potential of the BWC technology. Officers, aware that the encounter is recorded, were more likely to document it.

The analyses of the lawfulness of NYPD stops of citizens support the position that the increase in stop reports made may be influenced by a heightened willingness of NYPD officers to file reports of their stops due to the associated video documentation of stops created by the BWCs. The stops made by the treatment officers, as well as frisks and searches in those stops, were less likely to be judged as lawful by the monitor team and NYPD Quality Assurance Division (QAD) auditors alike, relative to stops made by control officers. It seems highly unlikely that increased unlawfulness would be caused by the presence of BWCs that are capable of producing evidence that could be used to punish officers who willingly violate citizen rights. The stops made by BWC treatment officers were also less likely to produce reports that involved full searches, the issuance of a summons, or the arrest of suspects when compared to non-BWC control officer stops. The increased share of stop reports without additional enforcement actions identified implies that BWC officers have increased their documentation of less intrusive encounters that would not have resulted in official reports in the absence of the technology. Therefore, the presence of the BWCs may enhance officer compliance with NYPD policy directives requiring the documentation of citizen stops.

The increased documentation of stops involving less serious encounters with citizens suggests that BWCs do deter officers from committing policy violations. NYPD policy requires that BWCs are activated during all pedestrian stops and that officers document these encounters by filing stop reports. NYPD QAD analyzes calls for service, incident, and arrest data to determine whether it seems likely an officer encounter with a citizen should have generated a stop report. When QAD finds that a stop report may be missing, they contact the precinct command to investigate whether a stop occurred and to ensure that the encounter was properly reported. The availability of BWC video for specific encounters greatly increases the risk that precinct commanders will detect unreported stops and the officer will be disciplined for not submitting the required paperwork. The presence of revealing video increases officer perceptions of the certainty of policy violation detection and the swiftness of punishment given that the video decreases the need for supervisors to locate and interview people involved in the encounter.

It is obviously concerning that NYPD officers continue to make some unlawful stops of citizens. However, our finding that body-worn camera officers document larger numbers of unlawful stops relative to non-camera officers is fundamentally good news. Put simply, if police departments are not aware that a problem exists, they are not able to take the required steps to remedy the underlying conditions that causes the problem to persist. The deployment of body-worn cameras on police officers not only increases their compliance with police directives to document all stops, it provides police departments with an important opportunity to intervene and monitor their progress towards more lawful policing.

2 Cynthia Lum, Christopher Koper, David B. Wilson, Megan Stoltz, Michael Goodier, Elizabeth Eggins, Angela Higginson, and Lorraine Mazerolle. (2020). Body-worn cameras' effects on police officers and citizen behavior: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 16 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1112>.

3 Civilian Complaint Review Board. (2020). *Strengthening Accountability: The Impact of the NYPD's Body-Worn Camera Program on CCRB Investigations*. New York: New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board.

4 New York University School of Law Policing Project. 2016. *Report to the NYPD Summarizing Public Feedback on its Proposed Body-Worn Camera Policy*. New York: New York University School of Law.

Getting Innovative in Savannah: The Development of a Practitioner-Researcher Partnership between a University and a District Attorney's Office

BY CHAD POSICK AND MATTHEW BREEDON

Chad Posick is an associate professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at George Southern University.

Matthew Breedon is the former violent crimes prosecutor for the Savannah-Chatham District Attorney's Office and current assistant district attorney for the Eastern Judicial Circuit of Georgia.

In 2016, Georgia Southern University (GS) and the Savannah-Chatham District Attorney's Office (SCDAO) established a partnership for the first time under the BJA-funded Innovative Prosecution Solutions (IPS) project¹. The GS-SCDAO IPS program is a prevention, intervention, and suppression effort aimed at diverting non-violent cases to community programming while focusing prosecution on violent gun offenders. A special prosecutor with a reduced caseload was specifically assigned to solely focus on gun crimes in the SCDAO to quickly bring charges on violent offenders and quickly process these cases. In addition, lower level crimes were reviewed by assistant district attorneys, and those determined to be committed by first time and non-violent offenders were assigned to diversion in a community-based intervention program called the Youth Intercept Program (YIP).

Figure 1 (page 16) illustrates the IPS program's activities, challenges, and solutions across many stages. An important result of this project was the identification of several important stages for successful practitioner-researcher partnerships between researchers and district attorney offices that may be helpful to others seeking similar partnerships. Here we describe the process and lessons learned from this partnership using a human development metaphor, to include the following stages: 1) prenatal period; 2) perinatal/infancy period; 3) childhood; 4) adolescence; and 5) adulthood. A developmental model of partnerships is a worthy heuristic. First, it provides a comprehensive overview of the life-course of a partnership from its earliest point (prenatal) to a fully developed relationship (adulthood). This "birds-eye" view allows partners to anticipate challenges and identify critical periods for ultimate success. Second, the developmental framework incorporates both process evaluation (to ensure

¹ This work was supported by: BJA Grant #2016-YX-BX-0005



Chad Posick



Matthew Breedon

proper development at all life stages) and impact evaluation to assess outcomes at the end of a project. Third, the framework promotes sustainability. All organisms wear out and need to care-

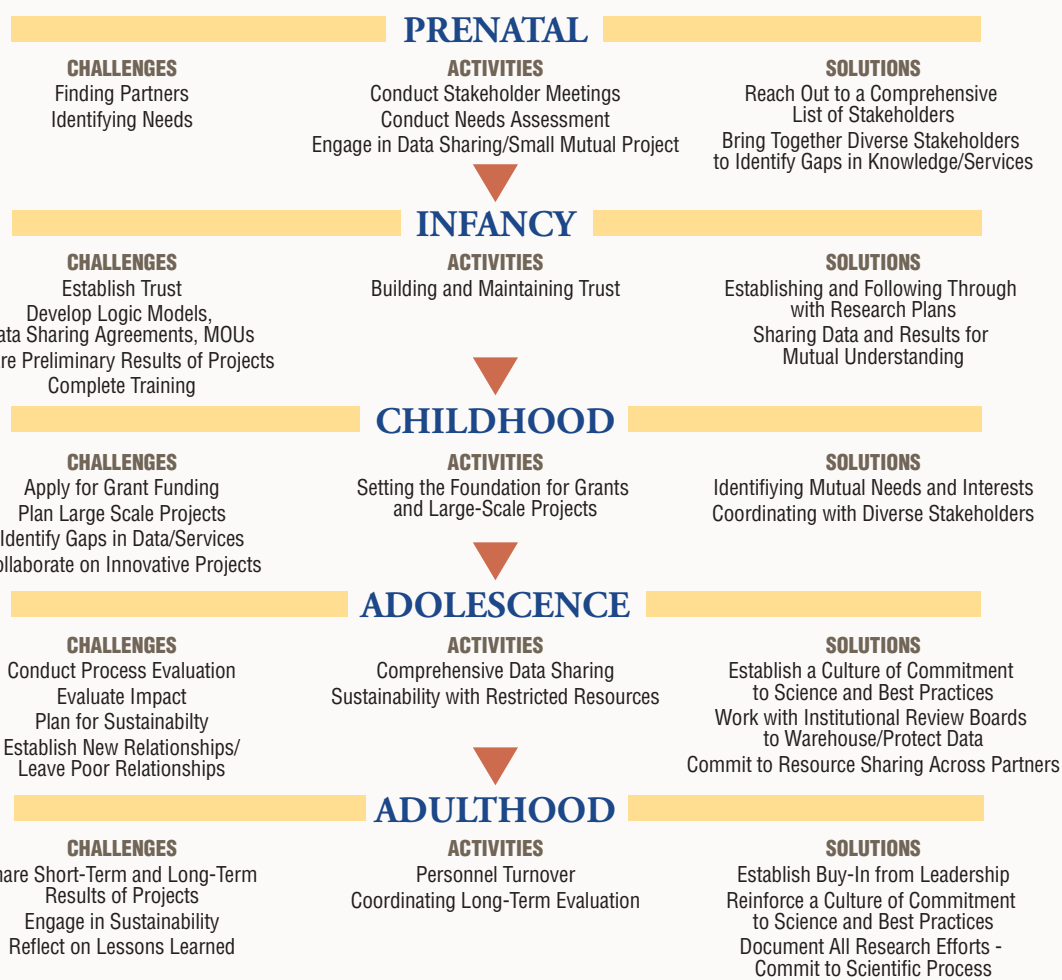
fully plan their sustainability. Practitioner-researcher partnerships are the same and the developmental model forces all parties to evaluate their role in the collaboration, identify sources of nourishment (e.g., funding, human resources, partnerships, knowledge), and plan to manage the future of their life.

To begin, the prenatal period – the time between conception and birth – is one of the most crucial stages in the development of an individual and can shape the future of that person. In particular, good nutrition (and also the avoidance of toxins) is required for the organism to develop and become a healthy infant. In partnerships, providing attention and nutrition during this "prenatal" period translates to data-sharing, stakeholder meetings, and grant management planning. Some of these efforts may even require some funding, especially given that the promise of future funding is never certain. When funding is not available, a partnership during this prenatal period is often developed and cultivated through small projects and exchanges that help with immediate needs of the practitioners. For instance, in Savannah, domestic violence was thought to be increasing in the community and researchers were able to confirm this through empirical analysis. Additionally, a part of an existing program, the Summer Law Program, needed evaluation. Researchers stepped in to conduct interviews or analyze survey data from this project. Building trust, regularity, and familiarity between partners are worth the effort before larger and funded projects begin. No amount of grant funding, interesting projects, or data will be convincing to either partner if fractured relationships and distrust exist between potential partners. As with the prenatal stage, bad starts can put the development of any partnership down a path to bad (or inefficient) outcomes.



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Figure 1. Critical Periods, Activities, Challenges, and Solutions



Birth and infancy are also critical stages in developing the templates and building blocks to a successful partnership. In the Savannah IPS project, we developed an overall mission and vision statement for the partnership which reminded the team of the ultimate purpose of the work and kept all stakeholders focused on the mutually established goal(s). Logic models were also critical to align goals,

actions, and outcomes. While these might change over time, having prior logic models developed saved the team time and enabled partners to modify documents as they saw fit. Other documents developed included: 1) data-sharing agreements; 2) memoranda of understanding; and 3) letters of cooperation/support from partners. Finally, project collaborators completed training (e.g., researcher

integrity, data sharing, human subjects) which facilitated the transition to the next phase.

Following our metaphor, the third stage, childhood, marks a critical transitional period that is focused on the impact of family life and potentially other stakeholders. In a justice partnership, this is the time to strengthen the partnership and potentially build new bonds with others who may help in the partnership's development. Similar to identifying the needs of children to enable them to flourish, this is the time to identify gaps in data and services. For example, we identified the need to create a family justice center that served victims/survivors in the community who were exposed to high levels of community and domestic violence. Childhood is full of disappointments. Not every grant will be funded, and not every project will be successful. Achievements might not be realized until adolescence (or beyond). This is a normal part of development.

Protective and risk factors are also important to identify at this stage. For example, developmental psychology shows that "play" is critical for positive child development and strengthens parent-child bonds. Innovative projects that interest partners which might not be specifically tied to any larger project or grant such as our effort to establish a practitioner-researcher project around cold cases in the SCDAO can assist in developing bonds between team members. In contrast, neglect, abuse, and maltreatment can fracture research teams.

Adolescence is marked by constant establishing, adjusting, and also discarding of brain development. In similar ways, partnerships during the adolescent stage have to be constantly learning, dynamic, and flexible to adaptations. This type of learning requires process and impact evaluations, and the development of new activities and ideas based on those assessments. Identifying what is and is not working along the way is better than finding out critical information at the end of a project. Our efforts to randomly assign cases to the IPS at the beginning of the project were doomed to failure when we talked with judges who said they would not cooperate. They saw it as an attempt to limit their discretion.

Finally, adolescence is a time to establish bonds outside the family with friends. Seeking out new partners and opportunities will aid in getting work done during this period. For example, our collaboration in Savannah is establishing a Family Justice Center to consolidate and strengthen services for victims, which was not in the initial IPS plan. It was also necessary to sever ties with the early administration of the FJC to move the organization ahead as the SCDAO originally envisioned it.

In adulthood, when the project was mature, we evaluated the life of the project and its impact. Self-reflection is just as crucial in partnerships as it is in people. We asked ourselves a series of questions: What worked? What did not? What were our findings? What unexpected challenges or impacts occurred? We considered our long-term identity by asking: Who are we, and what do we do? Of course, part of this is assessing what we have done through impact evaluations.

Such assessments add to conversations about "what works" in evidence-based practice, center the improvement of local outcomes, and support the planning of future projects. In our collaborations, process and impact evaluations were conducted using rigorous mixed-methods (i.e., quantitative and qualitative analysis) to provide a 360-degree view of the project outcomes. This included interviews with staff and participants, analysis of law enforcement data (e.g., police, prosecution), and before-and-after analysis of quantitative questionnaires. It should be noted that mature partnerships, just like adults, are not finished products. We used our evaluations in the adulthood stage to improve and evolve. We discovered that our prosecution efforts had to be coupled with community outreach to be genuinely effective. Thus, we conducted a community survey and responded to resident concerns, leading to a community-wide "clean-up" in high violence areas.

While the development perspective of a researcher-practitioner partnership is useful in reflecting on a collaboration, it is not a perfect analogy. For example, the activities discussed in early and middle childhood will be revisited in mature relationships. Grant writing, new partnerships, and new projects can continually develop – hopefully with fewer challenges than when the partnership began.

Like people, partnerships should seek to prolong the process of senescence, or the body's deterioration with age. Researchers and practitioners can stay connected through informal projects whenever there is no official project being conducted. As with physical and mental exercise, even small projects can sustain long-term partnerships. For example, practitioners might need assistance analyzing the prevalence of a particular crime (such as our domestic violence issue) or mapping its distribution. These practices generally do not require much time or effort, but they can revitalize a relationship. Similarly, because researchers need to publish and present research, provide services to the community and profession, and teach classes as part of their academic lives, practitioners are invaluable as sources of data for publication efforts, as community collaborators, and as guest presenters in classes. Our collaboration led to a study on repeat and single-incident burglaries in Savannah and multiple in-class presentations to students and community members. All of these activities benefit both partners.

Practitioner-researcher partnerships provide several benefits to both parties and the larger academic and local communities. They are also exciting, as they keep the partners up-to-date on local issues and strategies to make a real difference for community members. From the outset, researchers and practitioners should be committed to working together for the project's life. It can be challenging, not unlike life. There are periods stunted and delayed by lack of funding, turnover, or just plain bad luck, but also periods of substantial growth and prosperity. The key is to plan carefully and strategically, and to be patient when needed. Such approaches enhance the odds that practitioner-researcher partnerships will grow and contribute to the larger academic field and community.

REACTIONS FROM THE FIELD

Can We Really Defund the Police?

Following the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in May of 2020, many have argued for defunding the police. Proponents for defunding argue for shifting resources away from law enforcement to other public services to improve the quality of life in marginalized communities and reduce the criminal justice footprint. However, the idea of defunding police has been met with resistance by law enforcement and communities with high rates of crime and poverty, who argue they need more police protection, not less. This summer, Lum, Koper, and Wu published, "Can we really defund the police? A nine-agency study of police response to calls for service" in *Police Quarterly* they argue that absent from the debate has been adequate research into the scale or nature of issues that police handle and whether other government or non-governmental agencies could effectively and fairly manage these problems better.

Analyzing over four million dispatched 911 calls from nine large, medium, and small agencies across the U.S., Lum et al. found not only were calls to the police voluminous but often for quality of life concerns for which there is no other clear organization who might respond. They also discovered a provocative finding: Contrary to public perception, calls related to people in mental distress accounted for only 1.3 percent of the dispatched calls on average across the agencies we studied. This finding was supported by another systematic observation study they conducted inside of 911 call centers.¹

They also found that officers rarely made arrests or wrote reports for a significant majority of calls to which they responded. Instead, most of the time (between 62 percent and 83 percent of calls received), they provided assistance, advice, or peacekeeping functions and took no further official action. For only 2 percent to 9 percent of calls across the nine agencies did a call result in an arrest or citation, and citations for traffic infractions made up the bulk of these official actions.

The findings raised several questions and debates in the field. Who besides the police would be able to handle these everyday concerns? What resources, staffing, and training would be necessary for these agencies? Would other agencies be able to handle the calls safely, fairly, and effectively? If an arrest or use of force is warranted, will other agencies be prepared, or will police still need to show up at these events, doubling commitments of government resources? If

defunding does not occur, can police change their approach to address these issues in more evidence-based ways while minimizing harmful consequences?

We asked three leading criminologists and criminal justice thinkers about their reactions to the study, and more generally, to the debate. Rod Brunson, Professor of Criminology at the University of Maryland; Nancy LaVigne, Executive Director of the Task Force on Policing for the Council on Criminal Justice; and James Burch, president of the National Police Foundation, each offer their thoughts below.



Rod K. Brunson

ROD K. BRUNSON

Professor, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Maryland

In addition to not always being able to clearly articulate expectations of municipal police services, the general public also lacks evidence-based knowledge concerning how rank-and-file officers spend their shifts.

Recently, this lack of understanding has been further complicated by heated street protests in response to an ever-expanding list of Black lives lost as a result of dubious police violence. Numerous organizations pushing wholesale police reform have supported campaigns to defund the police or outright dissolve departments. Arguments for redirecting public funds to other city agencies and departments are grounded in beliefs that police are not qualified to handle certain calls (e.g., citizens' mental health crises) and that decreasing officers' footprints in distressed, urban neighborhoods might also reduce the disproportionate use of lethal force against Black residents. Lum and colleagues aptly "...point out that [the defunding] debate has proceeded without adequate research about either the scale or nature of issues that the police handle or the potential consequences of the proposed reform efforts." Furthermore, the authors underscore that "while there is a general understanding that police respond to some non-emergencies that they should not, the empirical realities behind what motivates people to call the police and the amount of resources spent responding to these calls for service have not been carefully examined across multiple police agencies."

Lum's research team's thoughtful analysis of CAD (computer-aided dispatch) records is well positioned to guide city leaders' decision-making concerning whether and if so how, to responsibly divert

1 Lum, C., Koper, C.S., Stoltz, M., Goodier, M., Johnson, W., Prince, H., & Wu, X. (2020). Constrained Gatekeepers of the Criminal Justice Footprint: A Systematic Social Observation Study of 9-1-1 Calltakers and Dispatchers. *Justice Quarterly*, 37(7), 1176-1198. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07418825.2020.1834604>.

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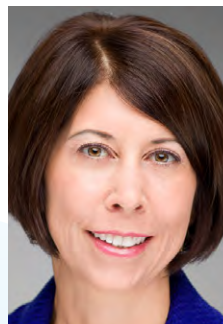
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various police responsibilities to other trained community stakeholders. As it relates to specific calls for service, officers were not regularly dispatched to mental health calls, a central focus of the defund movement, but once on the scene, such assignments involved considerable time investment. Moreover, the authors note “traffic-related calls for service [were] not only the largest proportion of calls for service received, but on average, [comprised] the largest proportion of time spent by agencies on calls for service.” Given current fiscal constraints and those that might worsen from carelessly raiding police budgets, we must seriously consider who benefits from officers devoting considerable time responding to minor traffic accidents (i.e., those without injuries) and property crimes (e.g., the insurance industry and personal injury lawyers). The aforementioned study findings demonstrate that officers’ time is money. Therefore, I offer that precious law enforcement resources should be allocated to

The likelihood that some (perhaps sizeable) share of mental health-related 911 calls are miscategorized has implications for policy responses.

addressing inner-city residents’ longstanding fatigue over ineffective policing (i.e., discourtesy, lack of empathy, slow response times, and unsolved murders). As with high-quality, empirical studies, Lum et al.’s findings will undoubtedly stimulate new theoretical and methodological curiosities. For example, although beyond the scope of the current paper, future studies must investigate whether police shootings more likely result from CAD or officers’ self-initiated activities. The proposed line of inquiry, however, will require compulsory collection of standardized data regarding lethal and nonlethal officer-involved shootings. In the meantime, activists, elected officials, and scientists alike, should turn to research-informed initiatives, such as Lum and colleagues, when contemplating whether to join the raucous chorus calling to defund the police.

My hard-worn experiences elucidating Black citizens’ dissatisfaction with under- and over-policing has revealed the prevailing view that police have an important role to play in crime control efforts. Specifically, it is not just repeated allegations of excessive use of force that increasingly chips away at police legitimacy, it is also generations of poor police performance. After more than two decades conducting research within disadvantaged, high-crime communities, I have consistently found that citizens want more, not less police. Most importantly, however, residents have steadily called for policing tactics that recognize their humanity. Therefore, any tangible guidance scholars can offer policymakers should include strategies for improved delivery of policing services.



Nancy La Vigne

NANCY LA VIGNE

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This article is nothing short of groundbreaking. Very little prior research exists on how officers spend their time responding to calls for service. This is essential information to guide decisionmaking around what potential roles (if any) could be safely offloaded from police to non-law enforcement actors. In fact, the Council on Criminal Justice’s Task Force on Policing, a body of eleven experts representing a diverse array of individuals and lived experiences, relied heavily on this article’s findings in their deliberations and recommendations.

Perhaps the most noteworthy and surprising finding in this article is that an exceedingly low share (about 2%) of officer time is spent responding to the mental-health related calls. This finding suggests that any offloading associated with mental health calls for service should not be associated with large reductions in police budgets. That said, it is important to dig deeper into the calls-for-service and dispatch data to discern whether some mental health-related calls may be miscategorized into other buckets. For example, a near plurality of calls that resulted in police response (16.2%) were for disorder events (coming in at a close second to traffic calls, at 16.8%). It’s likely that some share of those calls are related to or caused by people experiencing mental health challenges. This underscores the importance of individual agencies analyzing their own jurisdiction-specific data and consulting any available narrative text to discern the degree of miscategorization and make corrections accordingly.

The likelihood that some (perhaps sizeable) share of mental health-related 911 calls are miscategorized has implications for policy responses. Jurisdictions that decide to offload mental health calls from police to civilian responders should not do so at the expense of training officers in crisis intervention. That’s because calls-for-service data do not represent the universe of encounters police have with people in crisis; some share of those interactions are a result of routine patrolling. Moreover, it may be unwise to focus efforts on offloading mental health calls altogether (for example, to mobile crisis units) rather than training officers on how to better handle them and teaming them with mental health clinicians via a co-responder model. Doing so would mitigate any safety risks associated with offloading while ensuring that incidents that could involve armed individuals are handled with the support of a mental health professional.

Finally, this report’s findings should be considered in the context of Lum et al.’s (2020) systematic social observation study of calltakers in one of the country’s largest 911 call centers. That study’s findings underscore the important role that calltakers could play in

correctly identifying the nature of incidents that ultimately merit police dispatch in a manner that mitigates harm to all parties.

With an estimated one in four people killed by the police have some type of mental health issue, this article's findings are highly relevant to current police reform measures and have important implications for the safety and well-being of community members and officers alike.



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Jim Burch

JIM BURCH

President, National Police Foundation

Lum, Koper and Wu's study of 911 calls in nine U.S. law enforcement agencies over a one-year period provides extraordinary insights into 911-call-initiated police activities that have – until now – remained elusive to nearly every conversation about reform and certainly many conversations about “defunding” the police. The variation,

time spent, disposition and volume of the calls confirm that defunding the police would be disastrous for communities; doing so would expose how unprepared we are to deal with the problems that we expect police to resolve and the incredible magnitude of what it would take to become prepared, likely well beyond the resources that have been allocated to policing to serve as a triage mechanism.

Time after time, police leaders have acknowledged that they would prefer not to spend public safety resources on matters that are not public safety concerns or in areas that the police can do little to address. Nevertheless, the phone continues to ring and demand for police response grows. The police consistently respond to issues and problems that are not or cannot be adequately addressed by other facets of government. In many places, the police are the only resource available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week to respond to such a variety of concerns. In most communities outside of urban and suburban centers, vastly insufficient resources likely exist to create a parallel response capability outside of policing. Establishing this capability through a government agency will be costly. Establishing this capability through volunteers and community organizations may

not be realistic in the vast majority of communities that have fewer people and resources. In many rural communities, volunteers are relied upon to respond to fire and emergency medical situations—many struggle with having sufficient resources to respond at all or to provide sufficient response time performance.

As we contemplate reallocation of police responsibilities or functions, we must also acknowledge the role that the community – 911 callers – play in what the police are doing, and where they are doing it. We call the police to resolve our family disputes, to complain about others, to ask about traffic, and sometimes to request actions that are influenced by our own implicit or explicit biases. In our conversations about over- and under-policing, we afford insufficient consideration to how 911 calls from communities – representing community demands for police service - influence police presence and response. This is not to blame communities, dismiss the challenges within policing (including over policing), or to suggest that police decisions don't contribute to the problems within policing and our justice system. We must confront those issues as well, but we must do so with the clarity of data and science such as presented by Lum, Koper and Wu, which provides important context and perspective.

This work allows us to see how the reality of police work – how time is spent, where and what drives these decisions - can significantly differ from public perceptions. It is essential to use data and science to better inform the public and to address the problems facing policing and communities more clearly and precisely. Improving, and even reimagining, the ideal scope and methods of policing, instead of dismantling it, would lead to a stronger profession that is fundamentally focused on improving safety and wellbeing while enjoying broad public support.



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Place, crime and race: A new research and policy agenda for crime and place researchers

SPECIAL ISSUE EDITORS: AJIMA OLAGHERE AND JOHN E. ECK

A wealth of research supports the importance of places, such as addresses and street segments, for understanding and preventing crime. Yet at the same time, very little theory, research, and research-informed policy that focuses on places also examines race and ethnicity, despite race being a central construct in social life. Understanding the role of race at micro-places and within crime prevention policies targeting social spaces is essential in advancing place-based criminology. The aim of this special issue is to

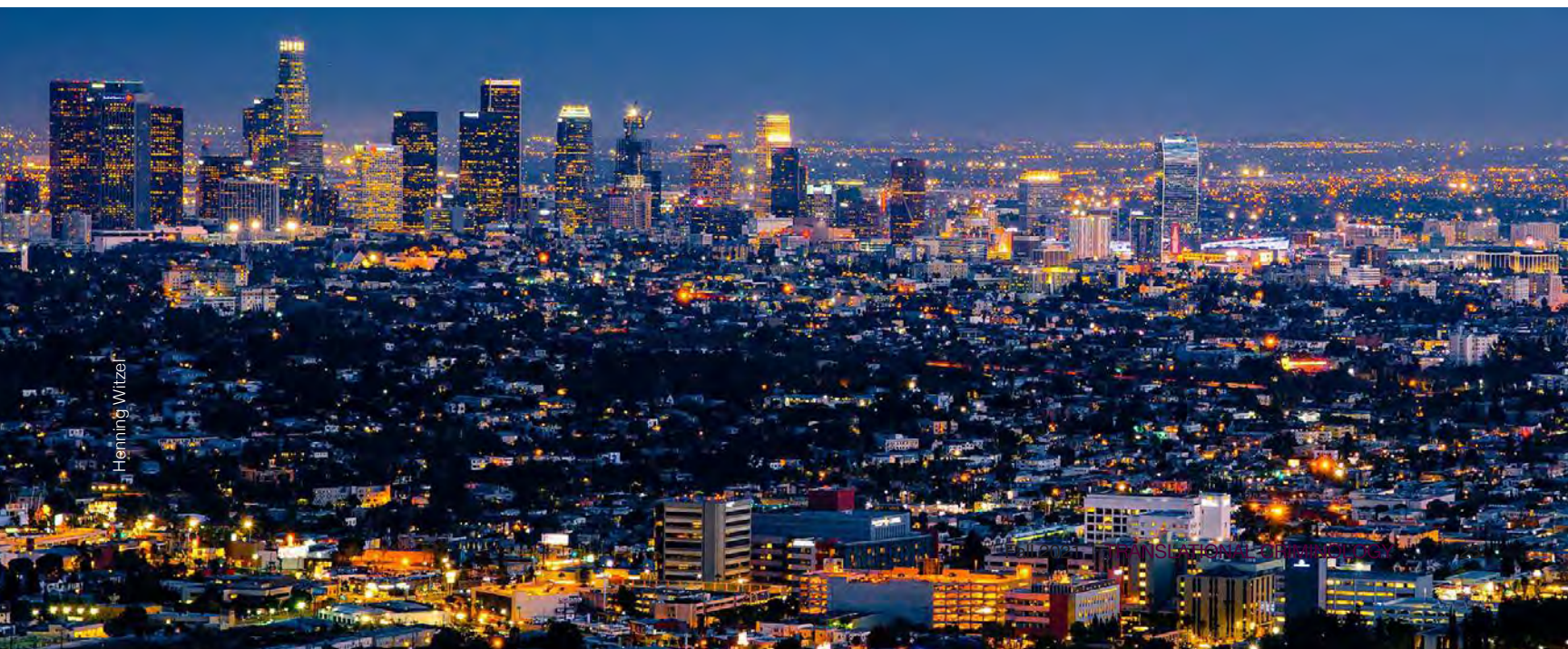
stimulate researchers, from diverse backgrounds, to address how race connects with crime, fear, victimization, and perceptions of crime and micro-places, and to do so with a policy and practice orientation. This special issue will provide an opportunity for scholars to address the value and shortcomings of race neutral scholarship in crime and place research. We are interested in studies that inform research, policy, and practice about the practical consequences of dealing with race, place, and crime.

Papers will be due no later than February 15, 2022 and must be submitted through CPP's ScholarOne Manuscript submission portal, <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/capp>. For more details about this call, visit the journal's website at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/17459133>.

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Hot Off the Press

Publications by CEBCP team members

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