

# Translational Criminology

WINTER 2012

The Magazine of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy  
George Mason University

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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.

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**Senior Fellows:** University Professor Stephen Mastrofski; Professor and Chair of CLS David Wilson; Associate Professor Christopher Koper; Retired Chief James Bueermann

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**Research Associate:** Julie Willis Hibdon

**Graduate Research Assistants:** Julianna Cameron, Breanne Cave, Jaspreet Chahal, Julie Grieco, Cody Telep, Zoe Vitter, Heather Vovak

**Executive Assistant and Office Manager:** Naida Kuruvilla

**Affiliated Scholars:** Elizabeth Groff (Temple University), Joshua Hinkle (Georgia State University), Brian Lawton (George Mason University), Linda Merola (George Mason University), Travis Taniguchi (Redlands, California, Police Department), James Willis (George Mason University), Sue-Ming Yang (National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan).

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**Evidence-Based Policing** (codirected by Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper)

**Systematic Reviews** (codirected by David Wilson and Charlotte Gill)

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WHERE INNOVATION IS TRADITION

### CONTACT US

Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy  
George Mason University  
4400 University Drive, MS 6D12  
Fairfax, VA 22030

**Website:** [gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp](http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp)

**E-mail:** [cebcp@gmu.edu](mailto:cebcp@gmu.edu)

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear CEBCP Community:

I hope you enjoy the second issue of *Translational Criminology*, CEBCP's new magazine that connects researchers and practitioners. Much has happened since the publication of our inaugural issue last summer.

Our fourth year began with our engaging and thought-provoking symposium, in which we partnered with the Campbell Collaboration to offer a joint conference on evidence-based policy for criminal justice, education, social work, and international development. More than 300 people attended two days of events, training sessions, presentations, and award ceremonies, exchanging ideas across multiple disciplines. During the symposium, we also offered daylong workshops on systematic reviews and evidence-based policing, which you can now freely access at CEBCP's new video library, located at our website.

The symposium was followed by the American Society of Criminology's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., where the Crime and Place Working Group (CPWG) organized nine panels involving dozens of scholars from multiple universities around the world to share their research on the criminology of place. We hope you will join us as a presenter or attendee at the next round of CPWG panels at ASC 2012 in Chicago. This year, the members of the CPWG will also embark on writing a primary text about crime and place, which will be published soon.

The CEBCP welcomed new members to our team this year. Dr. Christopher Koper, previously the director of research at the Police Executive Forum, joined the faculty of the Department of Criminology, Law and Society as an associate professor. He now codirects the CEBCP's Evidence-Based Research Program. Much of his research can also be found at our recently renamed Criminal Justice Policy Research Program. Retired chief of police James Bueermann (Redlands PD), who specializes in evidence-based policing, joins our senior fellows, and retired Chief Darrel Stevens (Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD) is the newest member of our advisory board. Four new graduate research assistants also came on board in the fall: Jaspreet Chahal, Julie Grieco, Julianna Cameron, and Heather Vovak.

Finally, the CEBCP was awarded a new grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance to create demonstration projects focused on translating research into practical applications for policing. We are especially proud of our continued efforts with our policing partners in Seattle (WA), Sacramento (CA), Fairfax County (VA), Alexandria City (VA), Richmond (VA), Redlands (CA), and Jacksonville (FL).

All these events and projects, and the many other tools and ideas developed at the center, including this magazine, focus on a subject we are all passionate about: finding creative ways to link practice with cutting-edge research to advance crime policy. As we enter the center's fourth year, we are proud of our accomplishments but excited to continue our collaborations and constantly seek new ideas about evidence



translation. *Translational Criminology* was established to do exactly that—to have those in practice, research, and public policy work together to share their efforts to improve criminal justice practices. Through these features, we highlight examples and demonstrations of the translation of research to practice. We hope scientists and decision makers both find inspiration in these articles and find them useful in developing analysis and research that is not only highly rigorous, but also useful and meaningful. We also hope this effort will spur other practitioners and researchers to team together in the advancement of evidence-based policy. The center maintains the eConsortium<sup>1</sup> to help these partnerships happen.

In this issue, we begin with an article by executive director Tim Murray (Pretrial Justice Institute) and Sharon Trexler, chief of pretrial services division in Montgomery County, Maryland, who show how the county is trying to break from traditional subjective approaches to pretrial release to systems based in research knowledge and analysis from the county's own data. Kristen Mahoney of the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention then discusses types of projects in which states can collaborate with justice researchers. Anthony Braga (Harvard and Rutgers Universities) and Commissioner Ed Davis (CEBCP Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame member) share lessons learned from their very successful long-term collaboration.

Then, Christopher Koper is joined by crime analyst Jamie Roush from the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office to show how an experimental evaluation can lead to changes in institutionalized operational deployment in policing. George Mason University professor Catherine Gallagher, director of the new Cochrane Collaboration College for Policy, responds to the question: Does framing justice issues using a public health approach increase the likelihood of the translation of research to practice? And finally, Jeremy Travis, former director of the National Institute of Justice and president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, reflects on the need for even more science and scientific standards for the practice of crime and justice.

And, as with the first issue of *Translational Criminology*, we highlight an important element of the future of evidence-based crime policy—our graduate research assistants. CEBCP assistants not only provide research support for the many projects that the center undertakes, they also are actively involved in planning our many events and activities. The training they receive in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society (where the CEBCP is housed) and this experience make them strong advocates of science in criminal justice practice and policy. The CEBCP currently sponsors eight graduate research assistants, three of whom are highlighted in this issue in our Eye on the Future feature.

We hope you will enjoy this second issue of *Translational Criminology* and invite you to visit our website to see all of our upcoming events.

Professor David Weisburd  
Director, Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy

<sup>1</sup> The eConsortium houses university researchers and centers across the United States and abroad who seek to connect with practitioners on research and evaluation projects. See [gmuconsortium.org](http://gmuconsortium.org) for more information.

# Research Projects and Upcoming Events

In our inaugural issue of *Translational Criminology* last fall, we highlighted our efforts in working toward goals of agency partnerships, collaborations, student education, research dissemination, and policy impact for which the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) strives. In this issue, we describe some of our major projects in which we are involved that emphasize these goals.

## Assessing TSA's "Playbook"

*David Weisburd (principal investigator [PI]), Cynthia Lum (CoPI), Charlotte Gill (project manager [PM]), Devon Johnson, Linda Merola, and Julie Hibdon (faculty researchers [FRs]), and Jaspreet Chahal and Heather Vovak (graduate research assistants [GRAs])*

Sponsored by a \$1 million grant from the Department of Homeland Security, this project is one of the first large-scale evaluations of comprehensive airport security strategies in the United States. The team seeks to build an understanding of security at airports through a national survey, an assessment of the Playbook against existing research evidence on crime prevention strategies, and both qualitative and quantitative field work in numerous airports across the country.

## Understanding the Relationship between Technology and Policing

*Christopher Koper (PI), Cynthia Lum (CoPI), James Willis (CoPI), Julie Hibdon (FR), and Julie Grieco (GRA), with the Police Executive Research Forum*

With funding from the National Institute of Justice, the research team is examining how police agencies are affected by key technologies, such as information, analytical, communications, and surveillance technologies, that are critical to primary police functions and evidence-based strategies that reduce crime and enhance police legitimacy. Through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and field experiments in four agencies, the team will seek to highlight organizational practices needed to fully realize the potential of these technologies to improve policing.

## The Matrix Demonstration Project

*Cynthia Lum (PI) and Christopher Koper (CoPI), Julie Hibdon (FR), and Cody Telep and Julie Grieco (GRAs) with collaboration from multiple law enforcement agencies*

Funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Matrix Demonstration Project (MDP) seeks to find creative ways that research can be institutionalized and translated to daily use by police practitioners. The MDP will house a number of freely available demonstrations and tools that will provide examples of how research can be incorporated into everyday practices, training, and craft of policing. For more information, visit the MDP website at [gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/MatrixDemo.html](http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/MatrixDemo.html).



Awards Luncheon at the CEBCP-Campbell Symposium

## Campbell-NPIA Systematic Reviews on Displacement and Community Policing

*David Weisburd (PI), Charlotte Gill (FR), and Cody Telep and Zoe Vitter (GRAs)*

With funding from the U.K. National Policing Improvement Agency, CEBCP researchers are conducting two Campbell systematic reviews of the evidence for displacement and diffusion of crime control benefits resulting from social interventions, and on the effectiveness of community-oriented policing programs. These reviews summarize the findings of the most rigorous evidence, helping practitioners focus on the most effective crime control strategies in these areas.

## Redlands Police Department

*Redlands Police Department (PI), David Weisburd (CoPI), Charlotte Gill (FR), and Zoe Vitter (GRA)*

CEBCP is working with the Redlands Police Department in California and the Omega Group to develop and evaluate an iPhone application for use by police officers in the field. The research includes an assessment of officers' technology needs and a forthcoming randomized controlled trial to examine whether the app, which allows officers to collect and access crime data and information at their location, enhances police effectiveness.





CEBCP with the Seattle City Council

### City of Seattle

*David Weisburd (PI), Charlotte Gill (CoPI), and Cody Telep (GRA)*

CEBCP is involved in a number of ongoing collaborations with the City of Seattle and Seattle Police Department, including an evidence-based review of the city’s crime prevention programs, plans for a pilot study of juvenile crime hot spots, and a research consortium bringing together a number of police departments interested in developing research and evidence-based policy.

### Why Places Matter for Crime

*The Crime and Place Working Group (CPWG), led by David Weisburd, John Eck, and Anthony Braga*

The CPWG is working on a book that will synthesize the crime and place literature and identify profitable directions for future research. The book will cover the history and importance of crime and place research, theoretical and methodological perspectives, supporting evidence, practical applications, and the future research agenda. For more information, visit [gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/cpwg.html](http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/cpwg.html).

## Upcoming Events

### Congressional Briefing—Reducing Gun Violence: Lessons Learned from Research and Practice

Led by Christopher Koper. The next congressional briefing will occur on Wednesday, February 22, from 10 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in the Rayburn Building on Capitol Hill. The briefing will feature several leading firearms researchers from criminology, economics, and public health to showcase research efforts in this area. To view videos of the briefing, go to [gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/Briefings/gunviolence.html](http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/Briefings/gunviolence.html).

### Jerry Lee Crime Prevention Symposium

The 12th annual Jerry Lee Symposium will be held April 23–24, 2012, in Washington, D.C., (April 23) and at the University of Maryland Inn and Conference Center (April 24). Day one includes a panel on low-cost experiments, presentations on the effectiveness of focused deterrence strategies and electronic monitoring, and a special roundtable led by Laurie Robinson on the effects of budget cuts in criminal justice. Day two includes panels on propensity score matching and the future of experimental criminology. Registration is now open at [gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/JerryLee.html](http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/JerryLee.html).

### Save the Date: CEBCP Annual Symposium

August 13–14, 2012, at George Mason University. The CEBCP symposium brings together practitioners, scholars, and community members to discuss issues related to evidence-based crime policy. The theme this year will be Translating Research into Practice.



Evidence-Based Policing Workshop

# Using Research to Improve Pretrial in Montgomery County, Maryland

BY TIMOTHY MURRAY WITH SHARON TREXLER

*Timothy Murray is the executive director of the Pretrial Justice Institute.*

*Sharon Trexler provides her insight to director Murray for this article. She is chief of the Pretrial Services Division for Montgomery County's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.*

The decision to release or detain a defendant pending trial is one of the most important in the criminal case process. The incarceration of those who could otherwise be safely released engenders substantial detention costs, lost employment and housing, family disintegration, and, of course, deprivations of personal liberty while “presumed innocent.” In addition, studies over the past decades have shown that defendants who are detained pretrial received much harsher sentences when compared with similarly situated defendants who are released pending trial. Conversely, releasing dangerous or flight-bound defendants creates a substantial risk of further victimization and the possible disruption of the court process.

Yet, as we look into our nation's courtrooms, we see this decision is often made in a matter of a few minutes and usually without any relevant information other than the arrest facts and possibly criminal histories to guide decision makers. In far too many instances, the

decision is made even before the defendant stands before the court. This practice occurs traditionally because bail is often set through the use of a schedule of bond amounts that correspond to the charge title rather than the individual's likelihood of failure to appear or re-arrest. Since the late 1960s, hundreds of communities have implemented pretrial services programs to assist the court in determining who can safely be released. Unfortunately, many of these programs subjectively assess risk, basing release recommendations on intuition or charge-based policies.

As a result, our nation's jails have essentially become pretrial detention centers. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that almost two-thirds of our jail populations are pretrial defendants, held simply because of their inability to post bond rather than the risk they pose.

A growing number of jurisdictions are replacing antiquated bail schedules and other subjective pretrial release practices with evidence-based approaches. Through the use of validated pretrial risk assessment instruments these places are providing decision makers with empirically measured risk-of-flight and re-arrest information for each defendant. The result? Higher pretrial release rates without a corresponding increase in failures to appear or crime commission while on release.

One such jurisdiction is Montgomery County, Maryland, located just outside Washington, D.C. When Sharon Trexler, a former probation officer, stepped into the post of chief of the Pretrial Services Division for Montgomery County's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, she knew changes were needed to provide the courts and the community with effective pretrial services. Much like the bail schedule approach, release recommendations made by the pretrial services program had been primarily based on the alleged offense rather than the risks and strengths of the accused.

“We were making pretrial release recommendations in about 11 percent of our cases,” reports Trexler. “I knew from the literature and from other pretrial practitioners that our rate was unacceptably low.”

Trexler proceeded to make a number of administrative changes based on an examination of the cases the court was releasing even though the pretrial release program had recommended





“We are now more confident in the appropriateness and the equity of our recommendations and supervision.”

—Sharon Trexler

against it. Pretrial services adopted alternative verification procedures and began to engage with family members who appeared in court on behalf of the accused.

“With some simple changes to our policies, we almost doubled our recommendation rate to 20 percent. I was learning from others in the field that until I replaced our subjective assessments with an evidenced-based approach, I would never achieve uniformity in our recommendation processes.” Trexler also was worried that the program’s subjective assessments were dependent on staff performance and attitude, and as such were ultimately indefensible.

With the assistance of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, James Austin was brought in to develop a validated pretrial risk assessment for the county using local data. “For the first time, pretrial defendants in our county were scientifically assessed for their risk of flight and recidivism,” notes Trexler. The notion of using science to inform the pretrial release decision came relatively easily to a system that was using risk assessments in sentencing and other justice functions.

The local Criminal Justice Coordination Council proved to be an invaluable venue to unveil the concept and garner support. “Even though the prosecutor knew we were anticipating higher release rates, he was an important supporter of our efforts to move toward evidence-based policies. The public defender had more concerns than anyone else, but we were to address each of their issues,” says Trexler.

The program also received support from law enforcement, the local bar, and the county commission. To be successful, however, Trexler had to ensure that line staff among a multitude of agencies understood validated risk assessment and had confidence in it. The Pretrial Services Division launched an aggressive campaign to train courtroom staff, line prosecutors, and defenders, as well as judges and bail commissioners on what could be expected from their new evidence-based policies.

As a result of these changes, the Pretrial Services Division now recommends release for 52 percent of the cases that come before the

court that otherwise would have had a financial bond imposed. This dramatic increase came without a corresponding increase in failure to appear or re-arrest while on release rates.

Buoyed by her success, Trexler knew she had to extend evidence-based policies beyond the release recommendations made to the court. “We, like many other criminal justice agencies, found ourselves over-supervising even the lowest risk defendants,” says Trexler.

With Austin’s help, validated assessment tools were developed to assign pretrial supervision levels. “Every defendant is assessed on release to identify his or her appropriate supervision intensity. They are then assessed every month thereafter to determine whether they can safely be moved to a lower level,” says Trexler.

Since incorporating validated supervision assessments, the program carries far fewer defendants in its most intensive (and expensive) supervision caseload, while experiencing a significant increase in the number of defendants in their minimum supervision ranks. As noted previously, these changes have not brought about an increase in pretrial failures.

“We are now more confident in the appropriateness and the equity of our recommendations and supervision,” reports Trexler. “Our outcome data are now more a reflection of our systemic response to an ever-changing caseload rather than a composite of individual staff behavior and intuition. Taking an evidence-based approach to whom can be safely released and how best to supervise them has enabled us to responsibly manage large caseloads. We now have a realistic assessment of the risk to public safety and of failure to appear posed by each defendant, and we are able to deploy our resources accordingly.”

Since taking an evidence-based approach to pretrial justice, the Montgomery County program has been visited by numerous jurisdictions from across the nation, as well as practitioners from Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru. Trexler plans to have the program’s risk-assessments revalidated in the coming year.

For more information about this and other pretrial innovations, visit [www.pretrial.org](http://www.pretrial.org).

# How States Can Leverage Research and Analysis to Fight Crime

BY KRISTEN MAHONEY, ESQ.

*Kristen Mahoney is the executive director of the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention.*

Parole and probation can be a state's biggest asset when it comes to addressing violent crime. Local law enforcement agencies' results improve when information is shared, violent offenders are identified, and a criminal justice system takes a unified approach toward holding those offenders accountable. Measuring those results and adjusting operations mid course is the key to institutionalizing effective practices. Partnerships with scholars Richard Berk at the University of Pennsylvania and Stewart Bruce at Washington College have been invaluable to Maryland as it deploys these critical, and not unlimited, resources to Maryland's communities.

As mayor of Baltimore from 1999 to 2007, Martin O'Malley set goals to significantly improve public safety. Yet, despite considerable progress in reducing the city's violent crime by nearly 40 percent and ending a decade-long run of more than 300 annual homicides, city officials felt limited because the state's Division of Parole and Probation (DPP) was not positioned to assist Baltimore in achieving even further reductions in crime. Transforming DPP into a full partner in the fight against crime would become the cornerstone of Governor O'Malley's public safety strategy for Maryland.

Prior to 2007, DPP was not effectively using data, analysis, and research to guide the assessment, identification, and supervision of violent offenders. Within its 70,000 supervisee population, DPP was unable to identify or predict with any level of confidence those supervisees who were most likely to be victims or perpetrators of future acts of violence. Maryland's most violent offenders were virtually indistinguishable among the ranks of 70,000 parolees and probationers throughout the state. As such, DPP could not be sure that the most at-risk individuals were receiving the highest level of supervision and the most comprehensive community-based services. Moreover, when offenders with violent criminal histories committed new offenses or violated the terms and conditions of their parole or probation, no policies or protocols were in place to ensure that DPP agents responded swiftly and consistently to noncompliant acts.

When the governor took office, he and his public safety team believed that more effective, information-driven parole and probation practices could improve public safety. They suspected that better identification of Maryland's highest-risk violent offenders and enhanced supervision of those offenders would save lives. At that time, the administration became aware of an article by Professor

Lawrence Sherman titled "Use Probation to Prevent Murder" in the November 2007 *Criminology and Public Policy*. In that piece, Sherman discussed how state parole and probation agents might leverage criminologists to assist them in identifying highest-risk offenders and mental health risk factors. The discovery of this article validated the O'Malley administration's belief that Maryland's DPP could, with some fundamental analytic changes, become a force multiplier in the fight against violent crime.

Maryland developed, in collaboration with Richard Berk of the University of Pennsylvania, the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) in 2007. The foundation of VPI was the creation of a common sense, easy-to-use risk assessment tool. By researching best practices across the country, evaluating traditional risk assessment tools, and scouring years of homicide and nonfatal shooting investigative files within the Baltimore Police Department, Maryland public safety officials determined that suspects and victims in homicides and nonfatal shootings shared certain characteristics. The team found generally that individuals with the following are more likely than other probationers to be an offender or victim in another shooting:

- Have seven or more previous arrests.
- Are under 29 years of age.
- Have a current offense of felony drug, felony assault, armed robbery, possession of a handgun, carjacking, kidnapping, or murder.
- Are victims of violent crime.

Rather than only rely on past theory and research about offending, using actual data from Maryland was an important part of developing smarter risk-assessment tools tailored to the state's offending trends. Maryland developed and implemented a tool that evaluates each offender's likelihood of engaging in future violent acts and establishes supervision protocols based on underlying risk. Again, while this may seem an obvious approach, it was nonexistent in DPP.

The VPI is a targeted and focused approach to identifying and monitoring that core group of offenders who are most likely to engage in future violence. VPI's diagnostic and operating plan seeks to prevent violence by intervening early when a VPI offender is released. Today, approximately 2,300 individuals in Maryland are subject to VPI supervision. Individuals who meet VPI criteria are subject to the most stringent requirements, including frequent face-to-face contacts with their agents, prompt detection of new arrests and other noncompliant acts, and swift and certain responses, including immediate requests for violation of probation warrants and parole retake warrants. Consistent and swift action by DPP is critical to ensure that offender behavior does not jeopardize public safety. All





Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley with Kristen Mahoney at City Stat

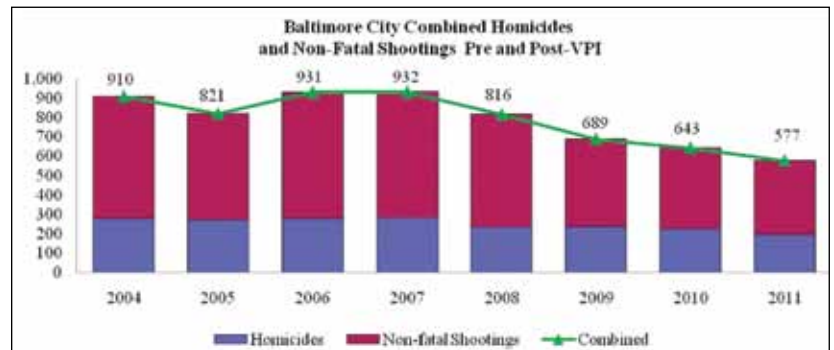
facets of supervision, including warrant tracking, are reviewed and evaluated for internal compliance.

One of VPI's cornerstones is unprecedented collaboration between DPP and local law enforcement. Law enforcement and VPI agents work side by side to monitor offender behavior and obtain warrants in a timely fashion. Agents notify law enforcement of the warrant's existence and stay in touch with law enforcement until the warrant is successfully executed. Because of VPI, local law enforcement officers and VPI agents maintain close working relationships to create a force-multiplier in the fight against violent crime.

In 2007, DPP began assigning full-time agents to police intelligence units across the state to further improve communications. These agents have become the foundation of VPI's intelligence and information sharing strategy. They ensure that information on violent incidents involving DPP offenders is immediately available to supervising agents who in turn respond immediately according to DPP's policy regarding the supervision of VPI offenders. Colocation of agents and law enforcement strengthens DPP's function as a criminal justice partner at the local level. Today, agents work side by side with police detectives in the Baltimore City Police Department, Baltimore County Police Department, Salisbury Police Department, Prince George's County Police Department, and Maryland's Fusion Center.

Using statistical forecasting procedures developed by Richard Berk of the University of Pennsylvania, Maryland has been able to evaluate and adjust the VPI method of community supervision continually, so the state can more effectively predict which probationers and parolees are at risk of committing violence or becoming a victim of violence. The state is also working with Berk on forecasting procedures for juvenile offenders that should be deployed in mid 2012.

Forecasting was a challenge. About 2 of 100 individuals under supervision "fail" as homicide perpetrators or victims. But Berk's machine-learning models were able to correctly isolate a high-risk subset in which nearly 80 out of 100 failed. That group had a concentration of problem cases that was 40 times greater than in the overall population of individuals under supervision. These circumstances mean that Berk's models can more accurately identify those probationers and parolees who actually become homicide victims or offenders from the pool of all offenders. If we can do that looking back, the models can be successful in looking forward or predicting individuals who are at risk to commit homicide or become a victim of homicide.



Building on these forecasts, Maryland's homegrown risk assessment tool has a level of third-party statistical validation that ensures that the VPI effort is properly focused and achieving results. State officials can evaluate whether agents are meeting the required number of visits and requesting warrants in a timely manner, and Berk's statistical models, using real-time offender data, can ensure that the risk assessment tool remains valid. Maryland's partnership with research in action also extends beyond using Berk's prediction models. Recently, the Maryland Statistical Analysis Center undertook an evaluation of VPI on its ability to identify high-risk offenders and its ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the supervision protocols used by VPI.

Maryland and Baltimore begin 2012 with unprecedented reductions in the number of murders. In 2011, homicides in Baltimore fell below 200, the lowest number since 1977. While surely not the sole basis for this historic decline, VPI coupled with the violent offender policing strategies deployed by the Baltimore Police Department and supported by the U.S. attorney, the work of the past five years has demonstrated more of a systemwide, data-driven, and research-oriented approach toward collectively directing public safety resources at that small population of offenders who are likely to do the most harm to our communities.

Maryland's VPI has received nationwide recognition for its innovation and effectiveness in reducing violent crime among that small group of repeat, violent offenders. In 2010, the National Criminal Justice Association recognized VPI as an outstanding criminal justice program, and in 2011, the International Association of Chiefs of Police acknowledged VPI's contribution to improving public safety with the prestigious Webber Seavey Award for quality in law enforcement.

*The author would like to thank the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, and Richard Berk for their contributions and assistance with this article.*

# Evidence-Based Policing in Practice: The Case of Safe Street Teams in Boston

BY ANTHONY A. BRAGA AND EDWARD F. DAVIS

*Anthony A. Braga is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Rutgers University and a senior research fellow in the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard University.*

*Edward F. Davis is the commissioner of the Boston Police Department and was inducted into the Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame in 2010.*

Evidence-based policing is part of a larger and increasingly expanding movement in social policy to use scientific research evidence to guide program development and implementation (Sherman, 1998). In general terms, this movement is dedicated to the improvement of society through the use of the highest quality scientific evidence on what works best.

Many police departments, unfortunately, adopt new strategic innovations without considering evaluation. Police executives exist in high-pressure, political environments that require immediate responses to rapidly unfolding events and crisis situations. In response to troubling increases in crime, some police departments implement reactionary strategies such as mobilizing saturation patrols of large problem areas or establishing a new specialized unit to focus on the issue of concern.

Other police departments quickly review the available professional literature on best practices in crime control and prevention, or may talk with colleagues in other police agencies that received positive news coverage for a promising program and then implement their version of whatever program, at face value, seems to fit the problem they need to address. Program evaluation is an afterthought at best.

These approaches to program development and implementation do not put police departments in a good position to determine whether the adopted strategies are actually generating the desired outcomes. More broadly, such approaches hinder the police profession from developing a scientifically based body of knowledge on what works in crime control and prevention (Weisburd and Neyroud, 2011).

We believe that this reality of police program development and implementation is not incompatible with an evidence-based policing model. While it is ideal to make evaluation plans before a program is implemented, rigorous evaluation remains an important exercise after police programs have commenced. However, there needs to be the ongoing commitment within the police department to developing

a practical knowledge base on newly implemented programs that is rooted in rigorous scientific methodology.

Strong academic-police collaborations are also essential in conducting high-quality analyses of program operations and effectiveness. Here, we highlight the considerable operational value gained by the Boston Police Department (BPD) via executing a strong ex-post-facto evaluation of a place-based police intervention.

The BPD implemented the Safe Street Teams (SST) hot spots policing program in 2007 in response to a distressing increase in violent crime in Boston. As with many police crime control and prevention programs, the Boston hot spots policing initiative was adopted without much thought given to impact evaluation. However, key elements of the program were rooted in evidence-based practices and past experience in launching a similar program in Lowell, Massachusetts (Braga and Bond, 2008).

Using computerized mapping technology and violent index crime data for 2006, the BPD identified 13 violent crime hot spots to receive the SST program. The program assigned teams of BPD officers responsible for using problem-oriented policing techniques to address recurring problems in the targeted hot spots. SST officers were required to engage community members and local merchants in defining and responding to identified problems in the areas. A deputy superintendent was assigned to oversee the initiative and in each violent crime hot spot, a sergeant and six patrol officers were assigned to implement the program.

In 2009, with the support of a Smart Policing Initiative grant from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance, the BPD and a team of researchers from Rutgers University and Harvard University set out to evaluate the SST program. The first component of the evaluation examined the concentration and stability of violent crime in the SST hot spots and elsewhere in the city between 1980 and 2008. The goal of this analysis was to determine whether the designated hot spots represented persistently violent locations worthy of a long-term investment of police resources. Results of the analysis were striking. Between 1980 and 2008, only 5 percent and 9 percent of Boston's street intersections and street block faces experienced 75 percent of gun assault incidents and 68 percent of robbery incidents, respectively (Braga, Papachristos, and Hureau, 2010; Braga, Hureau, and Papachristos, 2011).

The analysis confirmed that the SST areas contained many persistently violent street intersections and street block faces. It also



**Professor Anthony Braga, Rutgers University**

revealed that many violent locations in Boston did not receive the SST program. The second component of the evaluation used statistical matching techniques to identify violent places that were similar to the SST hot spots for inclusion in a rigorous quasi-experimental impact analysis (Braga, Hureau, and Papachristos, in press).

The analysis revealed that the SST program generated a statistically significant 17 percent reduction in violent crime at the SST street intersections and street block faces relative to comparison street intersections and street block faces elsewhere in Boston without simply displacing violent crime problems into proximate areas. These results confirmed the crime prevention value of this place-based policing intervention and were used to expand the concept to address a broader range of crime and disorder problems in Boston.

The third component of the evaluation examined the processes through which SST officers generated the observed crime control gains. These data were collected via reviewing the weekly reports submitted by SST sergeants to the deputy superintendent overseeing the program, interviewing the SST sergeants on their problem-solving actions in their places over time, and through regular visits to the SST hot spots. The process evaluation revealed that the implemented responses to violence problems did not follow a one-size-fits-all model; rather, the responses varied according to the nature of the underlying conditions that caused the targeted places to be violent. The research also revealed that the commitment to problem-oriented policing varied across the 13 SST hot spots. Better supervision and supplemental training were necessary to ensure that all locations received the program as designed.

Evidence-based policing represents an important paradigm for police agencies strained to produce desirable outcomes in an era of



**Edward Davis, Boston  
Police Commissioner**

limited resources. The complex and challenging environment in which most police departments operate can make it difficult to conduct rigorous evaluations. The Boston SST experience described here suggests that when police departments are committed to developing scientific evidence and have academic partners to assist with research design and analysis issues, the principles of evidence-based policing can generate and put into practice highly beneficial knowledge. This experience also revealed that an evidence-based approach can be implemented using a variety of research approaches that fit with police department goals. The development of a strong knowledge base on effective police practices can better position police executives in their management of evolving political demands by avoiding the implementation of knee-jerk, reactive programs in favor of approaches that will generate the desired outcomes.

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# From Research to Practice: How the Jacksonville, Florida, Sheriff's Office Institutionalized Results from a Problem-Oriented, Hot Spots Policing Experiment

BY JAMIE ROUSH AND CHRISTOPHER S. KOPER

*Jamie Roush is the crime analysis unit manager in the Jacksonville, Florida, Sheriff's Office.*

*Christopher S. Koper is codirector of the Evidence-Based Policing Program in the CEBCP and associate professor, Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University.*

Hot spots policing has gained widespread acceptance as an effective approach to reducing crime; however, police continue to grapple with identifying the most effective strategies for implementing and sustaining hot spots policing. In 2009, the Jacksonville, Florida, Sheriff's Office (JSO) undertook a research initiative that has substantially altered its approach to hot spots policing as a method to control street violence. Here we describe the project and JSO's ongoing efforts to translate this research into daily practice.

With funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance, JSO collaborated with Bruce Taylor (National Opinion Research Center) and Christopher Koper (CEBCP) to test different policing strategies at hot spots of violent crime.<sup>1</sup> The project team identified 83 "micro" hot spots (averaging 0.02 square miles in size) of nondomestic street violence that had exhibited high concentrations of violence over multiple years. These locations were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: problem solving, directed-saturation patrol, or no change for a 90-day experiment that ran from early January through early April 2009.

Although crime declined in both intervention areas, effects were strongest in the problem-solving locations, where serious violence declined by 33 percent. The problem-solving activities were conducted by teams of supervisors, officers, and crime analysts who were assigned to cover the initial 22 problem-solving hot spots on a full-time basis. The teams attempted to identify and address the underlying factors driving crime in these locations, working closely with community partners when possible. Officers implemented a wide array of measures, including situational crime prevention,

code enforcement and nuisance abatement, partnerships with business owners and rental property managers, community organizing, improvement of social services, aesthetic improvements, and targeted investigation or enforcement.

Rarely in practice does a research study result in a permanent change in police operations; however, JSO was committed to building on this study and institutionalizing this approach to hot spots. Doing so has posed a number of challenges with regard to resource allocation, training, and the ongoing refinement of problem solving, a strategy with which JSO had only limited prior experience. JSO's efforts provide important lessons in translating a research experiment into regular deployment.

Specifically, JSO created the Operation Safe Streets (OSS) unit in June 2009 to continue the problem-solving work that began during the experiment. The OSS unit consists of 20 officers, selected largely from the experimental problem-solving group, who are dedicated to full-time problem solving. Making this commitment during a time of significant resource constraints was difficult (JSO recently had to lay off 48 officers). JSO command staff and OSS managers had to vigorously market the success of the previous project and the concept of problem solving in staff meetings, agency roll calls, informal training sessions, and an agencywide computerized training session. In addition, OSS unit officers tried to be ambassadors for problem solving to their peers.

During the first postexperiment phase of OSS (June 2009–August 2010), officers were assigned to 19 hot spots that were identified during the original project but not assigned to problem solving. The officers received enhanced training in problem solving that built on the project experience, and they were no longer restricted to a 90-day intervention period. Removing the 90-day restriction allowed officers to work at their own pace and ensured that each stage of the problem-solving process was not rushed or overlooked—a common pitfall for problem-solving efforts. Officers were also encouraged to examine and develop responses for all sides of the Problem Analysis Triangle.<sup>2</sup>

Responses to problems by OSS officers in new areas mimicked many strategies developed during the initial project (e.g., situational crime prevention and partnerships with community stakeholders).





Jamie Roush



Christopher Koper

This phase also resulted in similar outcomes; however, OSS also found that officers' effectiveness is more directly tied to how precisely they define problems in their hot spots.

Learning from this first postexperiment phase, OSS managers realized two main challenges that hindered problem solving. During the experiment and first poststudy phase, JSO's Crime Analysis Unit provided officers with an array of information about crime and community stakeholders in their hot spots; however, officers became too reliant on the crime data at the expense of following their natural professional instincts and engaging individuals with knowledge of the area, such as beat officers, city officials, business owners, and citizens. OSS managers also recognized the need for additional and more frequent training.

Hence, beginning in August 2010, the agency adapted OSS further. Officers were not provided initial hot spot data but were instead instructed to conduct an observation phase in their hot spots. They were encouraged to think about policing at a time when data did not exist in their current form and engage individuals to obtain information about the area. Officers received formal and informal training individually and as a collective unit in the middle and end of each phase to improve their understanding of this process. Starting this year, OSS officers also will meet regularly to discuss their progress, allowing personnel working in different locations to discuss problem-solving efforts in an open and dynamic forum where they can learn from one another.

Finally, OSS managers continually try to identify and provide training on specialized skills that officers need for problem solving. For example, some officers were conducting surveys and interviewing ex-offenders to obtain information about their hot spots; however, many of the officers had little preparation for such efforts. Therefore, OSS managers arranged for officers to receive training on how to develop, analyze, and use surveys to understand crime problems. Officers were also trained on how to interview ex-offenders, not for



Sheriff John Rutherford and the OSS Command staff gaining community support in a recent OSS hot spot.

prosecution but to obtain information about hot spots where they live or have committed crimes.

In sum, JSO's efforts to institutionalize the OSS program, which was based on an experimental evaluation, reflect the agency's dedication to evidence-based policing. Through the experimental project and subsequent phases of OSS, JSO's command staff has supported this research-based initiative by devoting resources, providing support and marketing for the effort, continually assessing results, and meeting the need for ongoing training. The agency's experience reflects the challenges and rewards of translating research into practice.

<sup>1</sup>See B. Taylor, C. S. Koper, and D. J. Woods. (2011). A randomized control trial of different policing strategies at hot spots of violent crime. *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 7:149-181.

<sup>2</sup>See the Problem-Oriented Policing Center at [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org).

# What Criminology and Public Health Bring to the Wrestle with Knowledge Translation

BY CATHERINE GALLAGHER, ADAM DOBRIN, AND THE STAFF OF THE COCHRANE COLLABORATION COLLEGE FOR POLICY AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

The underlying principle of translational work is “...to accelerate the capture of the benefits of research for the public” (Canada Health Research Institute, 2004). Not all disciplines, however, are equally positioned to minimize the gap between original research findings and everyday practice. For all the variation within an area of research, there is a corresponding amount of variation in everyday practice. For instance, each professional field has its own constituencies, guidelines, and codes of conduct. How information—correct or not—passes through a professional field varies vastly from field to field. Successfully harnessing the right information from the right research field, at the right time, for the right audience is neither easy nor graceful and certainly has not been solidified as a clean-cut science.

Here we ponder the question of whether a public health perspective on crime is better suited to quickly inform daily life and decision making than is traditional criminological inquiry. To do this, we must first consider the context in which translational research emerged and the elements of a discipline that make for a more amenable loop between research and practice.

Translational research emerged as one of the many cottage industries growing alongside the information proliferation of the past several decades. Along with the likes of information news aggregators and cultural curators, translation researchers arrived on the scene to help make sense of the ever-growing mound of information; a mound that grew exponentially each day and contained great variables in terms of quality. The aim of the knowledge translation field is simple: to ensure that the public (which bears much of the cost of research) benefits from the best research findings in a timely manner.

Perhaps it is not surprising that it was in the medical and public health fields that this development first occurred and where it was quickly established that, within a discipline, different types of research have systematically different implications for practice. The National Institutes of Health took the approach of delineating the broad spectrum of scientific inquiry into two main types: bench science and bedside science (Woolf, 2008). Bench science is science that grapples with understanding the underlying mechanisms of, in the case of medicine, disease. Bedside science is science that informs clinical and health care decision making. They are also referred to as T1 (bench) and T2 (bedside). Hence, the slogan “from bench to bedside” emerged as a marker that a research program aims to move

basic science quickly through its paces so that it may benefit the public.

A direct analogy exists between the medical bench and bedside sciences found in criminology. Take, for instance, the quantities of study over the past century that consider the causes and correlates of crime. These represent bench criminology. Studies examining the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions are more along the lines of bedside science. Regardless of discipline or location within the bench-bedside spectrum a piece of research falls, translational researchers submit that all research should be ultimately judged on its ability to inform the public and decision makers about how the phenomenon is felt in daily life and how to best predict, change, or control the phenomenon using the best, most cost effective, and least harmful technique.

So now we pause to consider how much of the criminological research produced (and perhaps more important, published) meets this standard. Is bench criminology more effective than bedside criminology at hitting this mark? And how could we improve all research to meet this objective? We travel back to the medical and public health models to provide some external parameters, noting that it is by no means a perfect endeavor.

The medical and public health fields have a few key elements that favor their ability to affect daily life and improve the utility of research. Space prohibits a full accounting, but first among these is the reality that much research in the medical arena relies on the highest rigor of study designs, which increases our confidence in the results. Straying from high rigor designs, as is often the case in criminology and criminal justice, means we have less confidence in the findings. This situation leads to even less confidence for daily practice, or, as it is said in the engineering field, we wouldn't drive our car across it.

Because there are fewer acceptable research designs, it is easier for the health science fields to adhere to consensual guidelines on the conduct and reporting of research. Byproducts of these guidelines are the benefits of enhancing transparency, minimizing waste, preventing duplication of effort (particularly when there is limited publication bias that favors positive findings), and facilitating rapid and equitable synthesis across studies.

Guidelines governing format appear as early in the research process as the formulation of the research question. The population,



Adam Dobrin, Sheri Van Vranken, and Catherine Gallagher at the Cochrane College for Policy at Mason

intervention, comparator, and outcome (PICO) method of framing clinical questions creates an environment in which research is more clearly specified and therefore its scope is more readily knowable for all users.

Additional guidelines range from reporting standards for original research (for instance, CONSORT—Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials) and guidelines for reporting results of systematic reviews (PRISMA—Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) to guidelines for assessing the quality of a study (GRADE—Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development, and Evaluation, and AMSTAR—the Assessment of Multiple Systematic Reviews). This means there is relative predictability in what each study will report and an expected reliability among independent evaluations of quality. This condition is not found in the criminological literature. While we may anticipate a few aspects of reporting, given the array of study designs and the absence of reporting guidelines, the variation across studies in the field is quite impressive.

In addition, the health science fields use standardized language where possible. Meta-thesauruses provide researchers with standardized key terms, so that subsequent searchers are more likely to correctly identify a study. This improvement over criminology's use of key terms may have a degree of standardization but also a large degree of variation.

Also, health science research (ongoing and completed) is stored in publicly accessible archives so all clinical trials may be identified.

Criminology has, to some extent, similar archives (for instance, the Inter-University Consortium of Political Science Research for data storage and the National Criminal Justice Clearing House), but the recorded information and format are not quite as rigorously captured for sorting, making the distance between the original study and the targeted audience a strange and winding road.

Beyond standardization, there is a final and crucial reason health sciences are better situated to influence practice; the translational research movement in this grew alongside the evidence-based practice movement in medicine. During this period, medical and public health research increased the rigor and standardization of all elements of the scientific process; the burden of proof of the utility of scientific inquiry; the investigation into communication methods (dissemination sciences); the investment in open access tools to summarize a knowledge

base and manage references; and the efforts to make publicly funded research available to the public. Suffice it to say, this same movement did not come to criminology and its bedside field of criminal justice practice. It was not until it was explicitly made an objective by John Laub, director of the National Institute of Justice, in a 2011 speech that the term “translational criminology” officially entered the criminological lexicon (Laub, 2011).

Yes, elements of public health research and the medical model of understanding crime and its consequences have been observed since the 1980s. But borrowing methodologies and importing perspectives study by study does not mean that the field of criminology has embraced all the structure required to systematically move science into practice. This step takes a commitment beyond the familiar end-of-the-proposal promise to present the findings of funded research in a conference presentation. There are signs that movement is being made in this direction in criminology, and some attempts at system-wide upgrades to reduce the obstacles between research and practice have occurred—take this magazine, for instance, dedicated to the mission of bringing research into practice.

What must the discipline do to make the transition away from magical thinking toward a more deliberate and coherent structure designed to move all types of research findings into meaningful guidance for practice? We offer a few thoughts.

- For all researchers: Every study we embark on should consider its final utility in informing practice. This is as true on the heavy theoretical side as it is on the systems side.

*Continued on page 18*

# Science and Passion in Criminal Justice Policy

BY JEREMY TRAVIS

*Jeremy Travis is president of John Jay College of Criminal Justice and formerly director of the National Institute of Justice. This is an adaptation of his speech for the 25th anniversary of the Sentencing Project at the National Press Club on October 11, 2011.*

For the past quarter century, the Sentencing Project has been able to achieve what few other organizations in the criminal justice policy world have achieved—to strike the right balance between hard-nosed, objective, and trustworthy research, on the one hand, and principled, logical, and strategic advocacy on the other. Consider just three examples: in large part because of the Sentencing Project, our country has reduced the racial disparities in sentencing for offenses involving crack cocaine, begun to roll back our felon disenfranchisement statutes, and reversed many of the mandatory minimum sentencing schemes that needlessly imprison thousands.

While the Sentencing Project and many others have made great strides, we still have much more to do to create a crime policy that is more effective and more humane. Too many victims have difficulty getting their lives back on track. Too often, our police use excessive force, fail to follow legal dictates, and undermine respect for the rule of law. Our system of adjudication too often coerces defendants to act against their interests and excludes victims from meaningful engagement. Our jails and prisons are frequently full beyond capacity and too often resemble human warehouses rather than humane places for reflection, rehabilitation, and restoration. Our response to crime is marked by racial disparities that belie our commitment to equal protection of the laws. And we have become a society with a growing population of individuals with felony records and prison experience, a population that we marginalize through legal barriers and social stigma.

For the Sentencing Project's 25th anniversary, I was asked to envision the world of criminal justice policy in 2036. I argued that we will need to harness the powers of science and passion to make substantial progress and defined five challenges we face. Here, for *Translational Criminology*, I present two of those challenges to highlight the role of science and passion in the development of the next generation of crime policy.

## **We must pursue a focused and scientific crime prevention agenda.**

We are fortunate to be meeting at a time when the crime rates in America are at historic lows. Violent crime rates spiked upward starting in the mid-1980s but then subsided and started a historic decline, dropping to rates lower than those seen in the 1960s. Less well known is the story of property crime, which has been in steady decline since the early 1970s. Our rates of property crime today are half their level when the decline started.

There are three important lessons for the future of science in crime policy from these observations. First, we need a much better understanding of why the crime drop happened. I can think of no stronger indictment of our field than this: we do not have a satisfactory, much less a sophisticated, understanding of the reasons that crime has increased and decreased so dramatically.

Second, we need to rethink what we mean by “crime prevention.” Too often we narrowly define “crime prevention” only in terms of programmatic investments in young people to help them lead more productive, prosocial lives. But clearly, over the past 40 years, this historic decline in crime rates has not come about because we invested massively in programs that helped our young people avoid criminal activity. Other policy choices have also made a difference. A rigorous, scientific exploration of changes in crime rates will identify a broad set of practices that prevent crime, assign costs and benefits to those practices, and, we hope, help us invest money and political capital in those crime prevention strategies that are proven to reduce harm. If we are passionate about reducing our crime rates even further by 2036, we will broaden our frame of reference and bring many more sectors of our society to the crime prevention table.

There's a third, uncomfortable lesson of the great American crime decline: we have no reason to be complacent. The rates of lethal violence in America are still higher than in Europe by a factor of five. And, if we were ruthless about our science, we must confront the reality that violent crime is highly concentrated in a small number of communities of color in urban America and in those communities it is concentrated among a small number of young men. These men are at high risk of being victims of violence and agents of violence.<sup>1</sup> To reduce rates of violence in America over the next quarter century, we must tackle this phenomenon head on.<sup>2</sup> A scientifically based crime prevention agenda would simultaneously expand our vision to incorporate the many ways crimes are prevented, while focusing laserlike on the neighborhoods and individuals at highest risk of the most extreme violence. Unfortunately, American society is not sympathetic to the argument that because young African American men, many of them involved in crime themselves, are at greatest risk of being killed, we should therefore devote our greatest resources to preventing those crimes. To advance that agenda, we must overcome barriers of racism, fear, and stereotyping. It requires both science and passion to win the day.





Jeremy Travis

### **We must use science to develop professional standards for the justice system.**

One of the most important recent developments in social policy generally and crime policy specifically has been to embrace the notion of evidence-based practices. The Office of Management and Budget has adopted this mantra with gusto. The Office of Justice Programs in the Justice Department has joined the chorus. George Mason University now hosts a Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy. I would like to challenge us to imagine a world when we will have much more evidence about what works and what doesn't and ask ourselves, How will we enforce the science of effectiveness? How do we ensure that practice follows research, and criminal justice agencies are held to evidence-based standards?

In imagining this new world, we are immediately confronted with the realities of our federal system in which the states are primarily responsible for criminal justice operations. Granted we have some national standards of practice imposed by federal courts through constitutional interpretations—think of the Miranda warnings—required of all police agencies. We have other standards imposed by federal oversight agencies—think of the FBI's reporting guidelines for the Uniform Crime Reports. Yet, as a general matter, we shy away from federally imposed standards of practice. Must it always be so? Can we create a national framework in which certain standards of practice, validated by strong science, have equal force and effect across the country?

This dilemma was highlighted recently by a court ruling in New Jersey<sup>3</sup> and a research report issued by the American Judicature Society.<sup>4</sup> Both examined the same issue: the unreliability of eyewitness memory. We know from strong scientific studies that eyewitness evidence can be gathered in a way that reduces the likelihood of error, without compromising our ability to identify the true suspect.<sup>5</sup> But

now we face a significant question, How do we, as a nation, ensure that all investigations involving eyewitness evidence are conducted according to proven procedures? This problem of a lack of scientific standards is not new. To cite well-known examples, we continue to fund DARE, scared straight programs, and batterers' interventions long after research has shown they are ineffective. On a broader scale, we fund programs of unknown effectiveness that have never been rigorously tested. And even when we have competent evaluations in hand, we care little about effect sizes (Does the program make a big or small difference?) and even less about cost-benefit analysis (Did the positive program effects more than offset the cost of the program?).

We cannot alter our federalist structure of government, but we can develop a robust concept of justice professionalism in which policies and practices of proven effectiveness are adopted by police, prosecutors, judges, corrections, service, and treatment providers. We need a professional ethic that views the failure to adopt those proven policies and practices as a form of justice malpractice.<sup>6</sup> As our science becomes stronger and our evidence base becomes deeper, we need to be passionate about demanding that the agencies of justice follow the dictates of science.

As we reflect on the past quarter century, the most profound trend has been the four-fold increase in America's incarceration rates. Reducing our reliance on imprisonment will take enormous help from science and our passion for reform. We need strong science to show the impact of imprisonment on the people held in prisons, their families, and the communities they left behind. We need strong science to demonstrate the effectiveness of alternatives to incarceration, in-prison programs, reentry initiatives, and new approaches to community supervision. But this is a policy area where even the strongest science will not be enough. We need passion to play a primary role in promoting a system that is more humane.

We punish too much and heal too little. Too often, we isolate, rather than integrate, those who have caused harm. Too often, we neglect, rather than comfort, those who have been harmed. Our over-reliance on the power of the state rather than the moral voice of family and community undermines the promise of our democracy. Yet, despite these realizations, we still face the next quarter century with hope—a fervent hope that in the next chapter of our history we can be more effective and more humane as we respond to crime; we can address the compelling problem of violence in our inner cities while reducing rates of incarceration and promoting racial reconciliation between the police and the policed; and we can return to rates of imprisonment that are consistent with our values as a nation.

<sup>1</sup>See for example, John M. Klofas, Christopher Delaney, and Tisha Smith, *Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) in Rochester, NY* (U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute

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# An Eye on the Future

An important component of the CEBCP team is its graduate research assistants, who provide research support for various projects and help organize many of the CEBCP's outreach activities. In this issue, we highlight three of our graduate research assistants who work in the center: doctoral students Jaspreet Chahal and Julie Grieco, and master's student Zoe Vitter.

## Jaspreet Chahal

**MAJOR:** PhD in criminology, law and society

**HOMETOWN:** Erlanger, Kentucky

**PREVIOUS EDUCATION:** BS in biology, University of Kentucky; MS in criminal justice, Eastern Kentucky University

**AREAS OF INTEREST:** Procedural justice, airport security, and evidence-based policing

**WHAT DREW HER TO CRIMINOLOGY:** Her interest in criminology began in medicine, when she worked at a level-one trauma center in Kentucky. "I was exposed to the other side of the story. When victims came in, they were followed by crime scene investigators, as well as detectives who were trying to put the pieces together prior to the crime," she says. And as she these encountered law enforcement professionals again over time, she became more intrigued with criminology. "Studying criminology allows me to blend my experiences and knowledge of medicine with my interests in criminal behavior," she says.

**HOW SHE CAME TO MASON:** Prior to coming to Mason, Chahal was well aware of Cynthia Lum and her work in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society. Lum, who is deputy director of the CEBCP, specializes in evaluations of policing interventions for crime prevention effectiveness, examining place-based determinates of street-level police decision making, and understanding counterterrorism efforts by state and local law enforcement. Lum's work, according to Chahal, closely resembles her own interests in criminology, further drawing her to the Department of Criminology, Law and Society. "I wanted the opportunity to work with Dr. Lum," she says. "I was very familiar with her work and many of her research interests coincide with mine."



**WHERE SHE SEES HERSELF AFTER MASON:** Right now, as she puts it, "the sky is the limit" with respect to where she hopes her training in criminology will take her. Currently, she is focusing on her studies and research, while still exploring her options after she completes her degree. "I am still learning so much about the different career paths that are available to me," she says.

## Julie Grieco

**MAJOR:** PhD in criminology, law and society

**HOMETOWN:** Niceville, Florida

**PREVIOUS EDUCATION:** BS in psychology, minor in criminal justice, University of Central Florida; MA in forensic psychology, Marymount University

**AREAS OF INTEREST:** Evidence-based policing, research methods, integration of criminology, and psychological concepts

**WHAT BROUGHT HER TO MASON:** Having studied nearby at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, Grieco was already familiar with Mason and its criminology department. What she says enticed her to Mason was its strong focus on impacting policy regarding criminology, as well as the accessibility of the work being produced in the program. "The research being conducted here is made available and understandable to practitioners," she says.

**WHAT SHE'S DONE OUTSIDE CRIMINOLOGY:** While a research assistant at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, Grieco assisted in studies dealing with suicidal behaviors in the U.S. Army and on the stress military families experience dealing with deployments.



**WHAT SHE IS WORKING ON NOW:** As a graduate research assistant in the CEBCP, Grieco is working on numerous projects. Among them is her help on the Matrix Demonstration Project, which is attempting to develop free tools that police and researchers can use to translate and institutionalize research findings into practice. She is also helping to coordinate the center's next congressional briefing on reducing gun violence.

**HIGH POINT OF STUDIES AT MASON:** At the time she was asked this question late last year, her answer was simple: "Does finishing my first semester count as a high point?" She adds, "I have had a great experience thus far, I have met a lot of respectable and inspiring people, I've worked hard and learned a lot, and I am looking forward to my future here at Mason."

## Zoe Vitter

**MAJOR:** MA in criminology, law and society

**HOMETOWN:** Reading, Pennsylvania

**PREVIOUS EDUCATION:** BS in special education, Millersville University (Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

**AREAS OF INTEREST:** The effects of government policy and the law-making process on crime trends

**HOW SHE DECIDED ON CRIMINOLOGY:** That was easy, says Vitter. She's fascinated by the interplay between the decisions made by our elected leaders and the world of criminology, particularly "by the ways in which government policy in all forms has an effect on crime," she says.



**WHY SHE ENDED UP AT MASON:** Vitter says the reputation of the criminology program at Mason piqued her interest. After researching the type of work being done by its professors, she knew she had to apply here. "Mason has an incredible staff of professors that is nationally recognized for its contributions to the field," she says. "When I was looking into studying criminology, there was really only one school that could offer such a high-quality degree program."

**WHAT SHE IS WORKING ON:** Vitter is working on a number of projects. For her thesis, she's investigating the relationship between foreclosure and crime in a suburban setting. "I've been involved in two systematic reviews: one that examines displacement and diffusion of crime at the macro level and another that examines the effectiveness of community policing," she says. She is working on another project that is helping to develop smartphone applications that would allow police officers to access and record data on hot spots, crime incidents, and people while out on patrol.

**HER DREAM JOB:** Vitter can see herself working in any of a number of different capacities after completing her education, including governmental, political, research, or remaining in academia in a research role. As for the present, she says, "I am really just focused on the journey right now rather than a specific goal."

**HIGH POINT SO FAR AT MASON:** Well, they are too many to count. "Any day I exceed my, or someone else's, expectations is a good day," she says.

- For researchers on the bench side of criminology: A coherent and reconciled research agenda is far more likely to be picked up for mainstream use than is a research agenda full of disparate findings, tweaked measures, and contradictory and lengthy narratives. In other words, favoring parsimony over volume will offer the public an easier handle to grasp. Here it is useful to remind ourselves that the journals with the highest impact factors tend to have the shortest page lengths. This doesn't mean their work is not thoughtful; it means the final words that appear were chosen carefully. Page limits are in a sense an artifact of the rigor of the underlying research infrastructure: the greater the infrastructure on guidelines for methodological rigor, transparency, and open access data, the more the outlet can rely on the field for policing quality.
- For the bedside of criminology: Research translation does not begin when the study ends. It begins at the conception of the study, and places more weight on stakeholder needs than on investigator interests.
- For leaders: The more that can be done to promote aspects of standardization (such as terms, measures, registries, quality, and access), the greater the reduction of waste and duplication, and the more readily research can be synthesized. This is not to say that one should crush natural variability and creativity of research programs, but that a degree of standardization within each program will enable more rapid harmonization of findings.

So to answer the question at hand, the medical and public health models are better situated to move research to practice than the field of criminology, not because their topics are inherently more public-ready, but because there is greater agreement regarding standards and the fields' onus to use public funding for public good. But remember, they too are far from perfect: it is estimated that 30 to 40 percent of patients do not receive care according to present scientific evidence, and 20 to 25 percent of the care that is provided is not needed or is potentially harmful.

As a last bite in this food for thought, health care research leaders have just made a plea for increased diversification of methods (e.g., Carolyn Clancy, director of the Agency of Healthcare Research and Quality, 2011) to aid our understanding of why these failures happen, and why it is so hard to get deinvestment from ineffective, harmful practices by the clinical community.

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## *Science and Passion*, continued from page 15

of Justice, 2005), and Andrew Papachristos, *The Small World of Murder* (retrieved from the World Wide Web on October 7, 2011: [www.papachristos.org/Small\\_World.html](http://www.papachristos.org/Small_World.html)).

<sup>2</sup>Employing and replicating, for example, the focused deterrence strategies developed by David Kennedy and documented in his recent book *Don't Shoot: One Man, A Street Fellowship, and the End of Violence in Inner-City America* (New York: Bloombury USA, 2011).

<sup>3</sup>State v. Larry R. Henderson (A-8-08)(062218) (2011).

<sup>4</sup>Gary L. Wells, Nancy K. Steblay, and Jennifer Dysart, *A Test of the Simultaneous vs. Sequential Lineup Methods: An Initial Report of the AJS National Eyewitness Identification Field Studies* (American Judicature Society, 2011).

<sup>5</sup>Elizabeth F. Loftus, James M. Doyle, and Jennifer E. Dysart, *Eyewitness Testimony: Civil and Criminal* (Newark, NJ: Lexis Nexis, 2007).

<sup>6</sup>Christopher Stone, Guggenheim Professor of Practice at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and I outlined a similar approach to professionalism in policing. One of the cornerstones of this new professionalism is the emergence of a framework of national coherence in the work of police agencies. Christopher Stone and Jeremy Travis, *Toward a New Professionalism in Policing* (Harvard: Harvard Kennedy School of Government, 2011).



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From left to right, Kristina Rose (National Institute of Justice), David Weisburd, 2010 Achievement Award Winners Darrel Stephens and Joan Petersilia, James Burch (Office of Justice Programs), and Cynthia Lum

## CEBCP AWARDS:

# Call for Nominations

### Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame

The Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame recognizes innovative law enforcement practitioners who have been central to the implementation of a high-quality research program in their affiliated agency, highlighting individual excellence in both using and conducting policing research. Nominations will be accepted through June 1, 2012.

#### Nominees must satisfy three requirements:

- Be or have been a police practitioner, either sworn or civilian.
- Have been central to the implementation of a documented rigorous scientific evaluation in their affiliated agency.
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The nomination form is available at [gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/HallofFameNomination.pdf](http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/HallofFameNomination.pdf).

#### Current Inductees

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- Commissioner Edward Davis (Boston PD)
- Chief Dan Flynn (Marietta, GA, PD)
- Chief Frank Gajewski (Jersey City, NJ, PD, ret.)
- Assistant Commissioner Peter Martin (Queensland, Australia, Police Service)
- Chief Constable Peter Neyroud (National Policing Improvement Agency, UK, ret.)

- Sir Denis O'Connor (Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, UK)
- Commissioner Charles Ramsey (Philadelphia PD)
- Chief Darrel Stephens (Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD, ret.)
- Deputy Commissioner Ian Stewart (Queensland, Australia, Police Service)
- Hubert Williams (President, Police Foundation; Newark Police Department, ret.)

### Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy

The CEBCP is now accepting nominations for the Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy. Consistent with the mission of the center, this award recognizes outstanding and consistent contributions by individuals in the policy arena who have committed to a leadership role in advancing the use of scientific research evidence in decisions about crime and justice policies. This role includes notable efforts in connecting crime and justice researchers with criminal justice institutions.

Nomination letters will be accepted through June 1, 2012. In your nominating letter, please describe the reasons for your nomination and include a copy of the nominee's curriculum vitae. Nominating parties are encouraged to collaborate with others to submit single letters of recommendations to the awards committee, rather than multiple letters.

Members of the 2012 awards committee are David Weisburd (chair), Lawrence Sherman, Frederick Lösel, and James Bueermann.

Please send your nomination to Cynthia Lum, CEBCP deputy director, at

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**[clum@gmu.edu](mailto:clum@gmu.edu)**

#### Prior Winners

**2011**—**Peter Neyroud** (Cambridge University; chief constable, National Policing Improvement Agency, ret.) and **Charles Wellford** (professor of criminology and criminal justice, University of Maryland)

**2010**—**Joan Petersilia** (Adelbert H. Sweet Professor of Law, Stanford University Law School) and **Darrel Stephens** (executive director, Major Cities Chiefs Association; chief, Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD, ret.)

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The background is a solid green color with several white geometric lines. There are two thick white lines that intersect to form a large 'X' shape. A thin white line curves across the middle. On the right side, there is a bundle of many thin white lines that fan out from top to bottom.

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