

Translational Criminology

FALL 2024

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

FEATURING

Public Criminology: Charting the Course
from Evidence to Action

Equity in Imprisonment Rates Does Not
Equate to Justice

When is a Benefit a Harm? The Paradox of Stop,
Question, and Frisk

The 2024 Distinguished Achievement Award Recipients

Beyond Arrest: A Closer Look at Law Enforcement
Assisted Diversion (LEAD)

Applying “What Works” to Stop Violence
and Save Lives

Empowering Community Organizations to
Co-Produce Public Safety

On-The-Ground Lessons from Launching Cure
Violence in Southwest Philadelphia

What Do We Know About State School
Safety Centers?

In Memoriam: Richard Rosenfeld

CEBCP MISSION STATEMENT

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

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From the Editor in Chief

Welcome to the Fall 2024 issue of *Translational Criminology* Magazine! For those of us at universities, the fall always represents both a return and a fresh start. We return to classes, colleagues, students, and to the new challenges and opportunities that the ever-changing and dynamic academic environment presents. For those of us engaged in research, practice, and partnerships, this season is when the federal fiscal year begins, new grants and projects are announced, and we all are on the conference circuits presenting our work to our communities. As we near my favorite holiday (Thanksgiving), I'm grateful to all of you, our readership, partners, and community, for your commitment to evidence-based crime policy and your continued interest in *Translational Criminology* and the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) here at George Mason University.

As we mentioned last Spring, the Magazine has embarked on a new phase with an expanded editorial team. Despite our growth, our goal remains the same: to provide an outlet for research-practitioner partnerships to showcase examples of the translation, dissemination, implementation, and institutionalization of research and scientific processes into criminal justice policy and practice. Toward this goal, your new editorial team at *Translational Criminology* has been hard at work in bringing you a chock-full issue that we hope you enjoy.

Of particular note is our first feature in this issue, written by Dr. Nancy La Vigne, Director of the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Director La Vigne's leadership has brought new life to public criminology and has elevated all of our efforts. The Criminology, Law and Society Department (which houses the CEBCP at George Mason University) hosted Director La Vigne for our prestigious 2024 Mastroski Lecture, which she presents in this issue in written form.

Following our largest and most successful CEBCP Symposium in June, we invited several panelists to write about their presentations so that those of you who were not able to make it could get a flavor of some of the engaging discussions. These topics explore complex issues, including the meaning and measurement of equity and justice in imprisonment rates by Johnson and colleagues; debates over stop-question-and-frisk by Ratcliffe, Weisburd, Braga, Nagin, and Webster; and a series of articles on community violence initiatives and the co-production of community safety (see articles by Abt and Magori, Giménez-Santana, and Solomon and colleagues). We also present the thought-provoking and call-to-action acceptance speeches of two of the most influential leaders in our field, Anthony Braga and Jerry Lee, the 2024 recipients of CEBCP's Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy. Additionally, this issue features two areas of justice policy where research continues to be developed, from diversion programs such as law enforcement

assistance diversion (LEAD, see the feature by Magaña et al.) to state school safety centers (see Boal and McKenna).

You will also see features in this issue congratulating the 2024 inductees into the Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame and the 2024 graduates of the International Summer School for Policing Scholars (ISSPS). The members of the Hall of Fame continue to amaze me, especially given the many challenges that continue to exist in institutionalizing research, science, and evidence-based reform in today's police agencies. The ISSPS is an initiative coordinated between the CEBCP, the Scottish Institute for Policing Research, Arizona State University, and this year, colleagues from Griffith University. This summer, 20 doctoral students graduated from the 2024 ISSPS, which took place in Brisbane, Australia.

Speaking of doctoral students, let me congratulate and thank five members of the CEBCP research team who graduated with their doctorates and are now taking the next steps in their wonderful careers. They are: Drs. Michael Goodier (now Project Manager at the International Association of Chiefs of Police); Kiseong Kuen (now Assistant Professor at Griffith University); Yi-Fang Lu (now Research Scholar at the Public Policy Center at the University of Iowa); Kevin Petersen (now Assistant Professor at University of North Carolina, Charlotte); and Taryn Zastrow (now Post-Doctoral Fellow for David Weisburd at the CEBCP). We look forward to their continued contributions to evidence-based crime policy!

Finally, with the help of our friend Joel Wallman, we say goodbye to a giant in criminal justice policy and criminology, Professor Richard Rosenfeld. Rick contributed to several CEBCP events and was a professional and intellectual mentor and friend to many. His extensive knowledge of criminology and crime seemed endless, and his contributions paved the way for many of us. I am grateful for all he has done for evidence-based crime policy.

Cynthia Lum

Editor-In-Chief, *Translational Criminology*
& Director, Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy



Public Criminology: Charting the Course from Evidence to Action

BY NANCY LA VIGNE

Nancy La Vigne, Ph.D., is the Director of the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. This is a modified version of Director La Vigne's 2024 Stephen Mastrofski Lecture, which she delivered for the Department of Criminology, Law and Society at George Mason University on February 26, 2024.

What is public criminology? Different people use different definitions. The most common one refers to the practice of scholars reaching out beyond academic circles and disseminating their research/findings to broader audiences, like criminal justice practitioners, public officials, journalists, and the general public. I view this as a narrow definition, although an important goal. Public criminology should extend beyond the narrow definition of translation and engagement to encompass a wide array of strategies—strategies that result in findings not just being heard about or understood, but also ones that inspire and actually lead to change on the ground, or what I call *evidence to action*.

I've organized my remarks around five global questions: 1) how do we know what works; 2) what more do we need to know; 3) how do we go about learning it; 4) how do we use evidence to drive change; and 5) what does this all mean for the future of criminology?

1) How Do We Know What Works?

Figuring out “what works” is an age-old question in our field, one that I've dedicated a substantial body of my research exploring. So, as an evaluation researcher, what I'm about to say is heresy, but here goes it: *We are spending far too much time focusing on what programs work, as if knowing that will inform the field about what to invest in and implement.*

I believe we over-emphasize which programs work because we treat programs as if they can be taken off the shelf and applied effectively in different places that have a different mix of crime problems, different underlying causal mechanisms, and different people engaged in those crimes. If this were true, why do we see the vast majority of replication evaluations failing to detect a statistically significant impact?

We need to recognize that the best strategies are typically local, focused on a thorough analysis and engagement with all relevant stakeholders, and directly related to the underlying causes of the problem under study. In other words, problem solving, which has been demonstrated by dozens of individual evaluations, as well as a Campbell Collaboration review, was found to be a successful strategy.

The key takeaway here is that we need to focus less on programs



Nancy La Vigne

and more on strategies. We need to support evaluations that examine an array of responses, along with the quality of their implementation.

But how do we measure the impact of strategies? This is the classic evaluator's dilemma, which I think may be responsible for our overreliance on brand-name programs to begin with. The dilemma is this: Most interventions consist of a variety of measures; how do we know which activities among

them are making a difference? Or does the desired impact rely on a combination of a subset of those measures? If so, which ones? Criminology could look to the public health discipline for a potential answer—namely, employing core components analysis.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, “Core components are the parts, features, attributes or characteristics of a program that a range of research techniques show influence its success when implemented effectively. These core components can serve as the unit of analysis that researchers use to determine ‘what works,’ and they become the areas practitioners and policymakers seek to replicate within and across a range of related programs and systems in order to improve outcomes.”¹

Now, I've always had a measure of healthy skepticism when it comes to meta-analyses. That's because a lot of the programs that appear similar by name—let's take work release, for example—are all lumped together to say whether the program type works. That could mean combining work release programs that include job placement with those requiring a living wage with ones that are tied to marketable skills and with those that are targeted to young adult women with minimal job histories. I suppose there's value in knowing whether the overall program concept works, but given the variation in the programs' components, scope, and intended population, what are we really learning?

However, with core component analysis, meta-analyses can shed light on which components make programs successful across a range of contexts. This, in turn, can help researchers identify with greater precision what works, in which contexts, and for which populations. So instead of “what works,” core components answer the question of “*why it works.*” That's the kind of information that will serve the practitioner community. (Caveat: I recognize that this isn't feasible for all intervention types, and you still need program evaluations to feed into the core component analysis, but I believe this approach holds promise).

2) What More Do We Need to Know?

My second point is about *what types of knowledge we need to grow.*

Evaluation work is important, but evaluations don't always tell us what more we need to know. In addition to knowing what works and why, it is crucial to answer the question of "*how it works*." Answering that question demands that we spend the time and effort to unpack interventions and processes in the ways that Stephen Mastrofski has done. One example from George Mason University (the home of *Translational Criminology Magazine*) is the seminal work of Cynthia Lum, Chris Koper and team on the nature and types of calls to 911, examining call data across nine jurisdictions. This work is important because without understanding the composition of calls to 911, we cannot assess whether police or alternative responders are best positioned to meet the public's demand for services.

Similarly, we need a better understanding of culture, capacity, and supervision in the context of training and other interventions. Many new measures are targeted toward leadership or line officers—sometimes both. We tend to focus on the top and the bottom but miss the middle—that all-important first-line supervisor.

In other words, *we need to invest more in basic research to understand emerging problems and inform the data-driven development of solutions to those problems.*

3) How Do We Go About Learning It?

Across both the "what works" and "how it works" areas is the all-important question of *how we learn what we need to learn*. To be candid, despite the excellent quality of my doctoral education at Rutgers School of Criminal Justice, I was not exposed to much about the craft of field research. I have learned on the job, through trial and error and the wisdom of more seasoned colleagues at the Urban Institute, the value of authentic engagement, inclusive research, mixed methods, and process evaluation.

First and foremost, we need to engage in authentic partnerships. The solution isn't as easy as finding an agency or community entity to partner with. Researcher-practitioner partnerships are most productive when the researchers care as much about informing improvements in safety and justice as they do about getting published in top-tier journals.

Police and other practitioners fear "gotcha" research—when researchers propose studies, access data, and don't even give them a heads up when they've published findings, some of which may be perceived as unflattering to the agency. Instead, researchers need to come to the table as equal partners. And it works both ways. I've conducted studies where I couldn't get my police partners to pay any attention to the findings—despite the fact that they invited me in to do the research.

We also need to conduct what I term *inclusive research*, or what I would say is the "right" kind of research. What do I mean by that? There's no one right methodology, to be sure—the method has to fit the research questions. But there are still right and wrong ways of going about the research. The wrong way is to collect data and assume you know what it's measuring. The wrong way is to produce findings without ground-truthing them with the experts. The experts are the patrol officers, investigators, victims, 911 call takers, service

providers, people with lived experience, and community members—the people closest to the problem you are trying to solve. This can range from full-on community-based participatory research to research that is largely empirical but still engages stakeholders in interpreting the findings.

That type of engagement demands that we employ mixed methods, or what I refer to as *numbers plus narratives*—numbers provide empirical grounding and evidence; narratives give context and meaning. Our field is too bifurcated, with people opting for quantitative paths and others defining themselves as qualitative researchers. Perhaps that's okay—we all need to pick a lane. But in doing so, we run the risk of conducting research that is not directly tied to implications for improvements in practice. That's why it's important that, even if we stay in our silos, we work across them through interdisciplinary research teams. Different training and perspectives can add tremendous value both to the research process and the resulting findings.

Combining researchers with different backgrounds and training can also help ensure that evaluation research is comprehensive and documents the quality of implementation. Unfortunately, very few evaluations attend to *implementation fidelity*. I'm troubled by funders who over-emphasize the importance of randomized controlled trials (RCT) without attending to the quality of how the treatment was implemented. What that means is that if you find through an RCT that a program doesn't work, you might be confident in the rigor of the methodology, but you won't know whether the program is flawed in theory or implementation. We could be rejecting highly promising interventions on that basis. We must do more to ensure that implementation evaluation is a central component of all evaluation efforts.

Across all these recommended research processes is the concept of approaching our studies through a *racial equity lens*. We cannot credibly study issues pertaining to safety and justice in this country without acknowledging our country's history of chattel slavery, Jim Crow, and much that followed, which has fueled institutional biases, fed mass incarceration, perpetuated structural disadvantage, and importantly infused the data we use and even the research methodologies we employ with biases. We need to be more intentional in positioning our research in that context. That means interrogating the data we use. Are arrests the best source of recidivism data when we know they are driven in part by where police patrol and who they pull over? Is putting a dummy variable to represent race in a regression analysis really measuring what we think it is?

The research process is highly important, and I believe it's foundational in ensuring the evidence we generate is not just shared but also leads to improvements in safety, equity, and justice. But moving on to the fourth segment of my remarks today, the question remains:

4) How Do We Use Evidence to Drive Change?

I referenced that my key goal at the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is promoting evidence to action. But what is the research on

how that happens? It's called implementation science, and I'm so pleased that Dr. Tamara Herold has joined NIJ as a Senior Advisor to me on this topic. Tamara has culled the literature on implementation science, both within but largely outside of criminology, to include, for example, the areas of public health and medicine. She came up with several key takeaways, (and unearthed dozens of models that have gone untested).

Here are a few nuggets:

- We know that credible messengers make a difference. We are all more likely to open our ears and our minds to new ideas and ways of doing things if someone like us communicates those strategies, someone we respect—a thought leader in the field.
- It's not just the messenger but how the message is conveyed. Storytelling is a particularly powerful means of communicating research evidence (although I would argue that it is even more powerful when quantified outcomes are included in the story).
- We know that checklists can be helpful in ensuring that evidence-based policies are followed. This comes largely from the fields of aviation and medicine but can certainly be employed in criminal justice.
- We also know that using the nudge technique is helpful—taking a practice that is already a habit and adding onto it incrementally. Building nudges into everyday practices can include embedding evidence-based practices (EBPs) into policies, software, and pre-existing performance metrics.
- And we know that the successful implementation of EBPs requires internal capacity so that staff have the time to learn about—and the tools with which to implement—EBPs.
- It's also essential that we celebrate those who are crusaders in supporting and implementing EBP—as the CEBCP's Hall of Fame does so effectively. George Mason University has led the way in that regard.

This all leads to the fifth and final question I'd like to pose and answer today:

5) What Does This All Mean for the Future of Criminology?

What it means is that we need to train our students better (not to mention ourselves) on research that makes a difference in people's lives. We need to invest in relationship building the same way we've long invested in skill building. We need to change the incentive structure to do a better job rewarding applied research and the practice of public criminology. Our applied researchers need to be rewarded for partnerships that have real-world applications.

This will not only fuel applied and actionable research, but it's also of critical importance for attracting and retaining students and creating a pipeline of the next generation of criminal justice scholars. More than ever, students today are attracted to criminology because of a passion for social justice. We need to complement that passion by teaching them the hard skills associated with research that engages people on the ground. The future depends on it—not just the future of criminal justice and sociology programs, but also the future trajec-

tory of advances in safety, equity, and justice.

I recognize I've laid a lot on the table. It is not my intent to simply toss a bunch of random ingredients your way and say, "you figure out the recipe." The federal government has an important role to play in guiding the field forward in the interests of public criminology and in pursuit of evidence to action. I'd like to share some of the ways we're doing that at NIJ:

- To build a better and more actionable knowledge base of what (and why it) works, we are requiring that all our funded evaluations include a logic model and process/implementation evaluation component.
- To grow knowledge on emerging issues, we are inviting proposals for formative evaluations on topics that require more basic research and piloting before they can be evaluation ready.
- To ensure research is conducted in a manner that is inclusive, employs a racial equity lens, and builds on the strengths of interdisciplinary teams, we have written these approaches into all solicitations as priority considerations. In addition, we recently announced the establishment of a Center for Enhancing Research Capacity at Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) run by John Jay College of Criminal Justice, an MSI and Hispanic Serving Institution. And we continue to support the WEB DuBois Fellowship for Research on Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Justice System solicitation, which includes an incentive to bid emerging scholars as co-PIs and rewards applicants who include a robust mentoring component.
- To ensure evidence leads to action, we released a solicitation for proposals to evaluate different strategies associated with implementation science. And we continue to support our Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science (LEADS) Scholars Program, which empowers research-minded law enforcement to integrate research into policies and practices.

Looking ahead, we could also use a lot more help and engagement from the academy. I firmly believe that until the leadership of these associations embrace and include a newer, younger, and more diverse generation of criminologists, getting sustained support for public criminology will continue to be challenging.

As Ruth Peterson called for in her presidential address to the American Society of Criminology (ASC) in 2016, the best strategy for informing policy debates and developments is for ASC, "to continue to grow the diversity of its membership; to integrate the research and findings of scholars of color into the mainstream of criminology; and to take further steps to conduct research and share findings with diverse audiences to ensure that post-truth does not become normative regarding crime and justice issues." The best way to do that is through public criminology.

1 <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/core-components-approaches-building-evidence-program-effectiveness>

Equity in Imprisonment Rates Does Not Equate to Justice

BY THADDEUS L. JOHNSON, WILLIAM J. SABOL, AND NATASHA N. JOHNSON

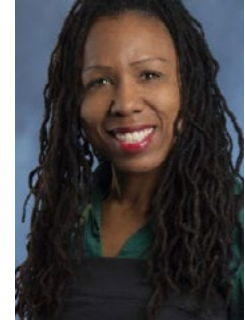
Thaddeus L. Johnson, a former police officer, is a senior fellow at the Council on Criminal Justice and teaches criminology at Georgia State University. William J. Sabol, a former Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics, is a Distinguished University Professor in Criminal Justice & Criminology in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. Natasha N. Johnson, a former K-12 educator, is a faculty member at Georgia State University.



Thaddeus L. Johnson



William J. Sabol



Natasha N. Johnson

Policymakers and reform advocates often rely on statistics to gauge progress on criminal justice issues. However, as the famous saying “there are lies, damned lies, and statistics” warns us, selectively using these numbers can be misleading. This is especially true when it comes to thinking carefully about criminal justice disparities and imprisonment. Take, for example, recent data showing a reduction in the racial disparity between Black and White imprisonment rates. From 2000 to 2020, the gap shrunk from 8-to-1 to 5-to-1. Some have claimed that this reflects ‘progress’—but not so fast. A closer look reveals a more complicated and less reassuring story. Our research indicates that this racial gap is closing not only because Black Americans are being imprisoned at lower rates, but also because more White Americans are ending up in prison.¹

We contend these changes do not indicate true criminal justice reform but rather a standardization of punitive measures across races. In other words, our justice system is not necessarily solving racial injustice; it’s just spreading the punishment around more evenly. Here, we explain how we arrived at this point and offer pivotal insights for meaningful criminal justice reform.

Declining Racial Disparity in State Imprisonment Rates

From 2019 to 2024, our team collaborated with the Council on Criminal Justice to study racial differences in criminal justice system involvement. Our goal was to provide data-driven policy and research recommendations. Since our first report in the “Pushing Toward Parity” series in 2019, the data have shown a narrowing of the racial gap in imprisonment rates nationwide since the early 2000s.

Apart from our national evaluations, we also looked at 12 states with diverse populations, criminal justice reform histories, and partisan leanings.² Data quality and availability were also key factors. Despite the complexity of untangling the effects of multiple reforms occurring simultaneously, we analyzed disparity trends and tracked changes in laws and practices that might help explain the observed shifts.

Nationally, the state imprisonment disparity ratio dropped from 8.2 to 4.9, and the difference in Black and White imprisonment rates fell by 51%. This decline was seen across the major offense categories:

- Violent crimes: Relative disparity decreased from 8.3 to 6.2.
- Property crimes: Relative disparity nearly halved from 5.3 to 2.9.
- Drug crimes: Relative disparity fell by 75%, from 15 to 3.6.

If we only look at these numbers, we miss important details concerning the timing and drivers of these changes, including demographic and policy shifts. For example, from 2000 to 2019, while the imprisonment rate for Black adults consistently declined, that of White adults fluctuated, peaking notably between 2000 and 2005.

This period of sharp increase in White imprisonment rates was a critical factor in the narrowing gap. After the mid-2000s, when White rates began to fall, the gap closed more slowly, requiring nearly 15 years to match the progress made in those first five years. Also, differences in population growth explain about half of the change in racial disparity, as the Black adult population grew over four times faster than the White adult population during the study period.

Equal Opportunity Imprisonment

Prison populations are a function of both the number of admissions and the length of stay. While racial differences in prison admissions helped reduce imprisonment disparity, racial differences in length of stay partially offset this effect.

New laws have not consistently reduced penalties for crimes that mostly affect Black communities, like crack cocaine offenses.³ Instead, legislators have increased penalties for powder cocaine and methamphetamine, traditionally seen as “White drugs.” This made the overall punishments for drug offenses appear more comparable between races. Sometimes, these new laws were put in place after practices on the ground had already moved towards more equal treatment.

Many states have changed laws to align with empirical wisdom on

making criminal justice processes fairer and more effective, particularly for drug offenses. These changes include revising mandatory penalties, giving judges more freedom in sentencing, and using alternatives to prison for nonviolent crimes. This shift in drug enforcement coincides with the largest offense-specific reduction in imprisonment disparity. However, the decrease in the drug imprisonment gap arose from 63% fewer Black adults and 26% more White adults being incarcerated for drug crimes over time.

Conversely, a more punitive approach is particularly evident in the handling of violent offenses. States have expanded the use of mandatory minimums, upgraded felony severity levels for violent offenses, and extended sentences to address disparities and ensure consistency.⁴ These stiffer penalties contributed to a respective 12% and 18% rise in Black and White adults imprisoned for these crimes. Coincidentally, the starkest remaining gap in imprisonment is for violent crimes, which has persisted at about 6-to-1 since 2016.

The Limitations of Incarceration

This project raises important questions about the sustainability of this approach to justice reform and public safety. Today, about two-thirds of people in state prisons are there for violent crimes. These prisoners also serve substantial sentences. For example, a Bureau of Justice Statistics study of 24 state prison systems reported that people convicted of murder who were released in 2008 had spent almost 18 years in prison on average.⁵

Our work also indicates increased punitiveness. From 2000 to 2019, the expected time served for Black adults imprisoned for violent offenses rose from 4 years to 4.9 years (or by nearly a year). Meanwhile, for White people, the duration of their stay increased from 3.9 to 4.2 years (or by about four months).

Stiffer sentences for violent offenders might sound good politically. However, research shows locking up more people for longer periods offers diminishing public safety returns.⁶ This is primarily because most criminals desist by middle age, a small number of people commit most crimes, and tougher penalties are less effective because offenders are often replaced on the streets, especially in gang and drug-related crimes. Additionally, higher incarceration rates can increase crime over time by disrupting social networks, reducing employment options, and promoting environments conducive to reoffending.

Reducing Racial Disparities by Increasing White Incarceration Misses the Point

Authentic reform requires a holistic strategy that addresses individual choices, as well as societal and economic determinants of crime and incarceration. To this point, let's take a closer look at racial differences in arrest patterns underpinning drug imprisonment rates.

Growing imprisonment rates among White populations are likely linked to the opioid crisis and financial struggles—issues that are strikingly similar to many of those faced by Black communities. Police operations concentrate in areas with more service calls,

historically leading to disproportionately more police interactions with Black people in urban areas. However, changes in police focus on certain drug offenses, particularly those involving drugs traditionally associated with White communities, reveal important insights into imprisonment disparity.

The opioid epidemic initially hit White communities in rural and suburban areas the hardest, causing widespread media attention and public concern. This shift in drug markets led to bolstered drug enforcement efforts in smaller towns and rural areas.⁷ Federal Bureau of Investigation arrests by age, sex, and race data from 2000 to 2016 show that drug arrest rates for both Black and White people decreased in major metropolitan areas.⁸ But in smaller urban and rural jurisdictions, drug arrest rates for White adults increased due to more policing of methamphetamine and opioid offenses.

Consequently, our analysis shows the largest metropolitan counties were responsible for much of the reduction in drug admissions disparity, primarily due to a decrease in the racial gap in Black-White drug arrest rates. Once again, the disparity between Black and White people has narrowed over time, not only because of lower Black rates but also because of higher White rates.

Beyond the Numbers

Achieving numerical parity in incarceration rates does not necessarily denote a fair and just criminal justice system. Likewise, existing disparities often reflect systemic inequities rather than intentional discrimination. Therefore, aiming for numerical parity is unrealistic for the criminal justice system alone. Instead, focusing on reducing the overall number of people involved in the system, regardless of race, might be a more humane approach.

But again, simply reducing the absolute number of prisoners does not guarantee that racial disparity will follow the same path. For example, when prison populations fell by 15% during the COVID-19 pandemic, the racial gap remained virtually unchanged because Black and White rates fell by similar proportions.

The study also highlights how well-intentioned reforms can sometimes have unexpected effects. For instance, efforts to reduce prison populations and reserve prison beds for the most serious offenders can sometimes make racial disparities worse. After California realigned its correctional system to reduce overall prison populations, the racial disparity in imprisonment increased from 8-to-1 to 9-to-1.⁹ This happened because the prison population began to include a higher proportion of violent offenders, reflecting existing racial differences in victimization and arrests for violent crimes and repeat offenses.

A Call for Reform and Future Directions

Offenders must be held accountable, and we recognize there will always be people who continue to offend despite reform efforts. To reduce recidivism and state prison populations without compromising public safety, we recommend that states:

1. Reevaluate sentencing laws and reduce sentences for certain

violent crimes. Law changes can impact disparity if they focus on offenses with disproportionately large (or small) numbers of persons of a specific race. For example, if laws reduced time served for robbery offenses by half, the total racial disparity in imprisonment would drop by about 7%-8% due to the much larger number of Black than White people serving sentences in state prisons for robbery.



2. Focus on rehabilitation in prisons, as studies show this can reduce reoffending rates.¹⁰

3. Make certain violent offenders eligible for 'good time' credits and other sentence-reducing measures, following California's example of rethinking the categorical exclusion of violent offenders from rehabilitation incentives.¹¹

4. Explore alternative public safety approaches that prioritize long-term, effective violence prevention and reentry strategies addressing the root causes of crime.

Importantly, since criminal justice policies alone are inadequate in solving the deep-rooted and complex issue of racial inequality, structural reforms aimed at improving public spaces, reducing neighborhood disparities, and alleviating concentrated poverty are crucial to promoting public safety and more equitable justice outcomes. Accomplishing this requires collaboration between governments, community organizations, businesses, and foundations to improve community well-being and address structural disadvantages.

Our study serves as a cautionary tale about relying too heavily on surface-level statistics without digging deeper into their context and implications. It underscores the importance of nuanced analysis and the potential for statistics to be used in ways that obscure rather than illuminate complex social issues.

Navigating toward an equitable criminal justice system demands more than numerical evaluations. It requires moral courage and leadership to tackle the core issues behind racial disparities. We must move beyond the comforting yet misleading belief that parity in incarceration rates signifies a post-racial society. This misguided belief can distract from deeper systemic issues, leading to ineffective policy changes and misdirected budgeting decisions.

Only through a nuanced understanding, comprehensive legislative changes, and targeted resource allocation can we build a justice system that truly offers justice and opportunity for all rather than merely distributing punishment more evenly.

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When is a Benefit a Harm? The Paradox of Stop, Question, and Frisk

BY JERRY H. RATCLIFFE, ANTHONY A. BRAGA, DANIEL S. NAGIN, DANIEL W. WEBSTER, AND DAVID WEISBURD

Jerry H. Ratcliffe is a professor of criminal justice at Temple University. *Anthony A. Braga* is Jerry Lee Professor of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. *Daniel S. Nagin* is Teresa and H. John Heinz III University Professor of Public Policy and Statistics at Carnegie Mellon University. *Daniel W. Webster* is Bloomberg Professor of American Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. *David Weisburd* is Distinguished Professor of Criminology, Law and Society and Executive Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University.

The biannual Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) symposium, held on George Mason University's Arlington campus in June of this year, provided an opportunity for us to discuss whether there is a place for stop-question-and-frisk (SQF) in policing and crime control. The catalyst for this public session was a Campbell Collaboration systematic review and meta-analysis on the same topic by Petersen et al. (2023), with accompanying summary article by David Weisburd and colleagues (Weisburd et al., 2023a). They concluded that "SQF interventions were associated with a statistically significant reduction in crime of approximately 13%" (p. 7), with even greater effects on gun crime.

They also, however, recognized that widespread SQFs can have negative impacts on the well-being of stopped individuals. While research on negative outcomes was often of lower methodological quality, the review estimated that those experiencing stops were 46% more likely to evidence mental health problems. Similar impacts were found on physical health, and the reviewers also noted that attitudes toward the police were affected negatively by SQFs. And finally, SQFs appear to lead to increased self-reported crime or delinquency.

What, then, can we discern from this research, and what does it mean for police and community leaders wrestling with violent crime? The CEBCP symposium panel of David Weisburd, Anthony Braga, Daniel Webster, and Jerry Ratcliffe, moderated by Daniel Nagin, sought to address this question.

We should get some legality out of the way first. There is a tendency for commentators to discuss SQF as a singular activity, but in practice, it constitutes multiple stages.

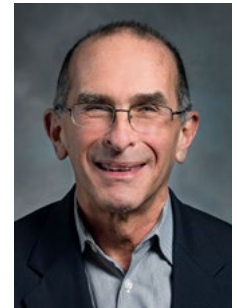
First, police officers are entitled to ask people questions based on a common law right of inquiry. Some departments, such as the New York City Police Department, might record this (as a 'level 1 encounter'), but most do not. In Philadelphia, even if there is some minor



Jerry H. Ratcliffe



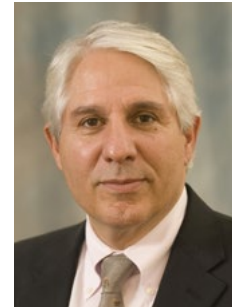
Anthony A. Braga



Daniel S. Nagin



Daniel W. Webster



David Weisburd

infraction taking place, officers can engage in what is called there a 'mere encounter.' During these interactions, the person can be approached and asked to stop any minor illicit behavior, but the person is free to walk away and leave, and cannot be detained.

If the officer has reasonable suspicion that something more serious is afoot, there is a constitutionally-protected right for police officers to perform an investigative stop, in what is informally termed a 'Terry stop' (named for the relevant Supreme Court case). Reasonable suspicion involves some minimal level of objective justification for making a stop, such as an individual engaged in or about to engage in criminal conduct. With reasonable suspicion, a person can be temporarily detained. If that reasonable suspicion involves the possibility that an individual is armed, then the officer may also conduct a pat-down search of their outer clothing.

Finally, the officer may have more than reasonable suspicion and have developed probable cause, in that the officer has a reasonable basis for believing that a crime may have been committed or that evidence of a crime is present. In certain circumstances, the officer may search a person or their property without a warrant. Therefore, what is colloquially called 'SQF' actually involves a more complicated legal continuum of officers making decisions to approach people, asking questions, detaining people temporarily, frisking them, or searching them and their property.

The panel tackled the issue of whether the use of SQF can be a viable crime reduction policy for a police department. The legality of the question of frisk (or search) components of SQF is contingent on the specifics of each individual stop. Any question of policy is therefore more about whether police departments should encourage proactive stops as a deterrence tactic. The conundrum faced by

policymakers is that, on the one hand, here is a mechanism that—when deployed judiciously—has been shown in some circumstances to enhance public safety and reduce crime. On the other hand, while the evidence shows considerable variation, there is indication that intrusive police activity can generate “strong negative health consequences for individuals who are stopped” (Weisburd et al., 2023a, p. 9). This generates the paradox of this article’s title—SQF is a tactic that can benefit communities but can also harm individuals in those same communities. It is reflective of the ‘disparity dilemma’ in which police are asked to do more to address racial disparities in crime victimization while simultaneously reducing racial disparities in police activity, itself a challenge to police legitimacy (Sherman, 2023).

The panel generally agreed that—if used at all—encouraging SQF should be a tool reserved for the most serious crimes in our communities, specifically gun crime. How significant is the gun crime problem? As Braga (2023) notes, nearly 20,000 people were killed in the US by gunfire in 2020. And even though they constitute just 2% of the US population, Black men aged 18 to 34 made up more than a third of all gun-related murder victims. Webster (2022) has convincingly argued that “gun violence is the number one public safety priority for many US cities” (p. 38), a challenge that wields extraordinary human and economic impacts across everything from lost productivity, medical and criminal justice costs to impacts on home values, credit scores, and urban blight.

But should a policy of proactive policing encouraging intrusive stops be used even in the case of gun violence? As Weisburd and colleagues (2023a) note, “Since there is no universal scale to equate crime prevention gains with health and other harms, a decision about costs and benefits must by necessity be qualitative and may differ across communities” (p. 13). In the United States, the communities most affected by gun violence are overwhelmingly Black and Hispanic. According to the Center for Disease Control, the 2022 firearm homicide rate for Hispanic people is more than double that of White people, and at 27.5 per 100,000, the Black homicide rate is more than thirteen times greater than that of Whites (Kegler et al., 2023).

Given this massive disparity in gun violence victimization, as a frontline agency with a mandate to address gun violence, the geography of police work is racially disparate before police even engage in any activity. Once proactive, the geographic disparity of the crime challenge is even more evident, and that this discussion occurred in a post-George Floyd world was not lost on anyone present.

The panel thus had differing perspectives, as is often inevitable when people are asked to weigh the merits of public safety policy with strategies that impact citizens’ confidence in and trust of the police. As Lum and Nagin (2017) point out, both public safety and police legitimacy are fundamental to a democratic society. The fact that the panel could not come to a consensus is reflective of the challenges faced by science in a dynamic operational policing environment. As Weatherburn (2009) has adroitly argued, “decisions about what policy to adopt invariably come down to political (value)

judgements about what risks, harms and benefits (i.e. outcomes) matter the most. This is not a job for researchers; it is a job for politicians and the public at large” (p. 337).

Should an agency adopt a policy of encouraging the type of proactivity discussed here, panel members suggested the following principles:

- The focus should be on gun violence in specific hot spot areas.
- Police should engage in intelligence-gathering to identify the most likely perpetrators of gun violence.
- These individuals should be the narrow focus of any proactive SQF-related activity.
- Participating officers must be trained in making lawful stops, conducting lawful frisks and searches, and engaging subjects in a procedurally just manner.
- Participating officers should be closely supervised while executing the strategy.
- Recovery of illegal weapons should be the priority for frisks and searches, while being cognizant that the overarching outcome is not total guns recovered, but a reduction in shootings.
- Using SQF as ‘fishing expeditions’ to uncover other criminality beyond gun violence should be discouraged.
- Police departments should monitor community sentiment in target areas and populations, and be sensitive to adjusting strategies if necessary.
- Once the violence has subsided, intensive proactivity should be dialed down.

Weisburd and his colleagues (2023b) dissent from this perspective, arguing that while they are sympathetic to these arguments, they think that the existing scientific knowledge “has not produced consistent enough evidence to allow us to assess the balance between benefits and harms with enough certainty to support the use of SQFs as a proactive policing strategy” (p. 5).

And they may be right. There was at least universal agreement on the need for further research. While the systematic review by Petersen et al. (2023) found 40 eligible studies, this was across a swathe of tactical options, insufficient to suggest a comprehensive policy recommendation for the myriad of politically and geographically diverse communities in the US and beyond. Furthermore, the methodological quality of many of the studies was also a limiting factor in drawing definitive conclusions. While many investigations were eligible for inclusion in the review, the Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment (Ratcliffe et al., 2011) was the only randomized, controlled trial.

Clearly, this will not be the last word on the issue. For readers seeking more information beyond the original study (Petersen et al., 2023; Weisburd et al., 2024), they should also consult three commentaries by Sherman (2023), Braga (2023), and Ratcliffe (2023), a discussion of the role of community consultation (Webster et al., 2018), and a response to the commentaries by some of the original authors (Weisburd et al., 2023b).

But practitioners and policymakers reading this, or who attended the CEBCP symposium panel in search of a definitive policy solution, will be disappointed. Other than a call for greater collaboration between police organizations and researchers in studying this issue, the policy recommendations above were not borne of consensus across the panel. We hope, however, that the complexity and nuance of the situation is now more clearly understood. It may be that consensus is unattainable, and with so much in public policy, any “judgements about what harms matter the most are irreducibly political” (Weatherburn, 2009, p. 335).

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Congratulations to the 2024 Inductees into the Evidence-Based Policing Hall of Fame!



The Hall recognizes innovative law enforcement practitioners who have been central to the implementation of a high-quality research program in their agency and also are relentless champions of institutionalizing evidence-based practices into policing. These leaders not only help make high-quality police scholarship possible but also advance significant reforms in policing by utilizing science in their decision making. Read more about each of the members at <https://cebcp.org/hall-of-fame/>.

(From left to right)

SHON BARNES, Chief, Madison (WI) Police Department,
JONAS BAUGHMAN, Captain, Kansas City (MO) Police Department
THOMAS CARR, Executive Director, Washington-Baltimore HIDTA
DAVID COWAN, Detective Superintendent, Victoria (Australia) Police Service
KEVIN HALL, Assistant Chief, Tucson (AZ) Police Department
SCOTT MOURTGOS, Deputy Chief, Salt Lake City (UT) Police Department
CHRISTIAN PETERSON, Police Data Research Manager, Portland (OR) Police Bureau
KEVIN THOMAS, Executive Director for Data, Analytics and Technology, Philadelphia (PA) Police Department

The 2024 Distinguished Achievement Award Recipients

ANTHONY A. BRAGA
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



Anthony A. Braga

I am truly honored to be a recipient of the 2024 Distinguished Achievement Award in Evidence-Based Crime Policy.

I am obviously very grateful to Cynthia Lum, David Weisburd, and the CEBCP faculty and staff who believed that I deserved to be recognized for the evidence-based crime policy work that I've done. I also would like to recognize the contributions of co-recipient Jerry Lee to evidence-based crime policy and his work with Larry Sherman in creating the Department of Criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. It's a terrific department where I feel lucky to have great colleagues and students to collaborate with and learn from.

My contributions to evidence-based crime policy would not have been possible without the deep insights, innovative thinking, and diligent work of practitioners. I honestly believe that I would not have had much of a career without their guidance and willingness to take risks. This is particularly true of the street cops, line-level prosecutors, probation officers, street outreach workers, and community members who do the difficult work of crime prevention. I've also benefitted greatly from the wisdom of agency executives who have been willing to develop and test new ideas, such as former Boston Police Department Commissioner Edward F. Davis, former Jersey City Police Department Chief Frank Gajewski, former Director of the Boston Ten Point Coalition Reverend Jeffrey Brown, former Chief of Staff and Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary for Enforcement at the U.S. Department of the Treasury Susan Ginsburg, and many other impressive thought leaders. I've been very lucky to work alongside so many talented and dedicated people.

There are many aspects of applied research partnerships with practitioners that are worthy of discussion. In the interest of time, I will briefly mention three ways that practitioners helped me make noteworthy contributions to evidence-based crime policy.

1) Understanding the Reality of Crime Problems and the Stiff Challenge of Prevention

Crime problems are complicated. A perplexing mix of individual, situational, neighborhood, and societal risk and protective factors often cause crimes to recur. Over the course of my career, I've spent a fair amount of time thinking about the nature of crime hot spots and how to apply problem-oriented policing strategies to reduce crime in problem places. As a young scholar, I had this naïve belief that the

causes of most recurring crime problems at specific places could be traced through analysis to an easily identifiable underlying condition. I also thought that the resulting responses to these underlying conditions would be equally clear. That might occasionally be true. However, it wasn't until I started spending time with police officers charged with controlling drug and violence problems on the streets of Jersey City that I learned otherwise. Hot spots can be very complex and recurring crime at these places often stems from numerous underlying problems. Multiple responses that can be equally complex are often needed. I learned much from those officers. It is not easy to control crime.

I am a far better researcher due to the willingness of practitioners to allow me to observe them in the field, ask questions, and take criticisms that improve the study.

2) Achieving Strong Program Implementation in Field Settings

Close partnerships with practitioners can lead to important insights on whether programs are being implemented correctly and, if not, what needs to be done to ensure robust implementation. As evaluators, we need to be disciplined to avoid bias in our assessments of the work being done. However, there are too many "black box" program evaluations that aren't testing the interventions that the evaluators think are being tested. Honest relationships with dedicated practitioners help you conduct fair tests of well-implemented programs. For instance, focused deterrence programs are associated with significant crime reductions but are notoriously difficult to implement and sustain. Programs that I helped design and implement in Boston, Baltimore, Oakland, and other cities required extensive development of enforcement, social service, and community capacity. Practitioners obviously played a central role in the delivery of the varied components of the strategy. They also were a source of constant valuable feedback on how things were going and steadfast partners on designing management accountability systems to ensure that programs were being implemented with integrity.

3) Taking Substantial Political Risks

Departing from traditional crime prevention work (even if it isn't working) is risky to the practitioners who choose to do so. Innovation is often necessary when facing persistent public safety problems. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees that changes in policy and practice will yield the desired results. Careers can be diminished or end when well-meaning programs don't pan out. The stakes are very high. What is more, good social science requires rules to be followed. Practitioners take risks when doing so. For instance, control groups or areas are often needed to determine whether a new program is working or not. The political pushback for not treating every hot spot or serving every high-risk person in a city can be daunting.

Practitioners who follow social science rules are taking big political risks. They also take risks when reallocating resources to help social scientists collect the needed data to measure program activities and outcomes. In sum, both the “evidence base” and the “crime policy” would not be possible without these brave souls. Society has benefited greatly from their selfless actions.

In closing, I would like to once again thank all the practitioners who have influenced my career. They were a key part of any success that I may have had.

JERRY LEE

THE JERRY LEE FOUNDATION

I want to thank Laurie Robinson, David Weisburd, Cynthia Lum, Chris Koper, and the entire staff at the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP) for all of the great work you do and for this great honor.



Jerry Lee

In June of 1997, I accidentally wound up on the Department of Justice website. The headline of the page was a new Congressionally mandated study titled “Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn’t, What’s Promising.” This groundbreaking study was authored by the University of Maryland Criminology Department, which was then headed by Professor Lawrence Sherman.

After reading the study, I thought that I could get my teeth into something like this. At 9 AM the next morning, I was talking with Larry Sherman and after an hour and a half on the phone, he asked me to come to Maryland so that we could get to know each other. We spent a day, and then another day, and then another day together. Within two months, I was named the head of his Advisory Board. We then put together a multi-million-dollar research program to advance the field of criminology.

When I was first learning about criminology, I attended many conferences around the world and read a lot of research. I quickly found that much of what was being presented was not high-quality.

Larry and I decided we needed to put a spotlight on the criminologists who were already doing high-quality research and encourage other researchers to follow their lead. That is what led to the creation of the Stockholm Prize. The incredible pace of improvements in criminology research since the prize’s inception has been exponential.

In 2007, I created the Jerry Lee Centre for Experimental Criminology at the University of Cambridge. Larry Sherman led the Centre from 2007 until taking the post of Chief Scientific Officer of the Metropolitan Police at Scotland Yard in 2022. He has made tremendous advances in proving the case for conducting low-cost randomized controlled trials (RCTs) within police departments. Police departments across the UK are partnering with Cambridge to do

numerous RCT’s. The results have been extraordinary.

I will never forget the time that Larry asked me to sit in on a meeting with Barak Ariel and the British Transport Police in London to plan the first RCT of patrols on underground platforms. One officer was arguing with another officer concerning changes being made to a program and said, “if we do that, it will no longer be a randomized trial.” I will never forget that moment. I couldn’t believe how far we had come.

For those of you who do not know what an RCT is, I would encourage you to look at the groundbreaking work researchers like Lawrence Sherman and John List (University of Chicago) have been conducting.¹

In 1961, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) changed its rules and mandated that at least two RCTs had to be conducted before a new drug could be brought to market. This standard changed the future of medicine and created the basis for the great discoveries in medicine that we are enjoying today.

I want to replicate the FDA’s approach and change the future of criminology in the process. While the Jerry Lee Centre has been conducting RCTs for the last 17 years, I am excited by the possibility of replicating the approach more broadly. I am also excited by the possibility of certifying that an intervention works only after it has been replicated twice with RCTs with results in the same direction.

While I am excited by the changes that have occurred in criminology research, I am also incredibly excited by the increasingly broad section of the population that is now interested in this field. This includes people like Jon Baron at the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, who has reviewed almost every piece of research that uses RCTs in the US and most of the UK, John and Laura Arnold, who are funding the most RCTs in the world outside of medicine and love funding studies that replicate RCTs, and Ken Griffin of Citadel, who made a large seed donation to the University of Chicago’s Crime Lab to help solve the problems facing police.

What would policing look like if officers had the insight from working with institutions like the Jerry Lee Centre for Experimental Criminology, George Mason’s CEBCP, and the Crime Labs at both the University of Chicago and at Penn, among others? How would policing change if RCTs and training were as much a tool on an officer’s belt as their automatic?

In short, for all of the changes I have seen, I am very excited for what comes next. Hopefully with all of us working together, we can revolutionize the field of policing like the FDA revolutionized medicine in 1961.

1 <https://voices.uchicago.edu/jlist/research/methodology/>



2024 CEBCP SYMPOSIUM





On June 20, 2024, George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy held its largest symposium to date, focused on "Hard Questions for Evidence-Based Crime Policy." More than three dozen experts in crime and justice gathered at Mason Square where they exchanged ideas with over 400 registrants on several topics, including reducing victimization harm; improving mental health response by justice practitioners; examining alternatives to criminal justice systems; re-thinking community-based violence prevention; intervening with persons at high risk for gun violence; stop-question-and-frisk policies; reducing disparity in the justice system; advancing effective juvenile justice strategies; improving recruitment and retention of officers; and developing the capacity for organizations to implement evidence-based crime policy. We look forward to seeing everyone at our next symposium in 2026!

Beyond Arrest: A Closer Look at Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD)

BY ERICA MAGAÑA, DINA PERRONE, AND AILI MALM

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Erica Magaña



Dina Perrone



Aili Malm

Punitive legislation and rhetoric stemming from America’s War on Drugs positioned law enforcement as moral agents in the fight against drugs while demonizing those who use drugs and those who commit low-level drug-related crimes. However, punitive policing practices, such as zero-tolerance policing, also contribute to mass incarceration and disproportionately impact minoritized individuals and communities. Relying on arrest as the primary, and sometimes only, response to drug-related crimes means that individuals are likely to become trapped in the revolving door of the criminal legal system, further eroding police-community relations. Instead of addressing the roots of the problem, individuals are cycled in and out of the system without support or improved life circumstances.

The Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Model

Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) offers police departments an alternative approach to addressing drug problems in the community that does not rely on arrest. At its core, LEAD is a pre-booking, police-led diversion model that redirects individuals who commit or are at risk of committing low-level crimes due to behavioral health issues or poverty. LEAD centers around four core values: 1) advancing racial equity; 2) doing what works; 3) respecting autonomy; and 4) taking harm seriously. To that end, LEAD was developed with six goals in mind: 1) *reorient* collective responses to safety, disorder, and health-related problems; 2) *improve* public safety and public health through evidence-based practices, including harm reduction; 3) *increase access* to care for individuals experiencing behavioral health and/or income instability; 4) *undo racial disparities* caused by the system; 5) *sustain* the collaboration of local, state, and federal partners; and 6) *strengthen* relationships among diverse program stakeholders.

Under the LEAD model, police officers can divert individuals into the LEAD program in lieu of arrest or bookings for certain offenses—typically misdemeanors or low-level felonies. Officers can refer individuals through one of two referral avenues: *pre-booking*

during which an officer encounters an individual engaging in a LEAD-eligible crime, or *social referral*, in which an officer refers someone to LEAD who, based on previous encounters, they know is likely to engage in a LEAD-eligible offense. Officers can immediately connect individuals with LEAD case managers in a process known as the *warm hand-off*. Case managers then engage individuals through a process known as *intensive case management* that is grounded in harm-reduction principles to help address individuals’ immediate and long-term needs. Most often, behavioral health, mental health, housing, employment, and substance use care are of greatest need among LEAD participants. Since its inception in Seattle, Washington, in 2011, the LEAD model has evolved to include a third referral avenue, one that does not require the involvement of the police. Recognizing that troubled police-community relations can create distrust between citizens and the police, under the *Let Everyone Advance with Dignity* model, local community partners can also directly refer individuals to LEAD to receive services and potentially avoid criminal legal system involvement altogether.

LEAD currently operates in 73 U.S. and four international sites in various capacities. Existing studies of the original Seattle LEAD pilot demonstrate that it is a cost-effective¹ alternative that reduces individuals’ short-term and long-term odds of arrest and felony charges by as much as 58% and 39%, respectively.² Additionally, LEAD has been found to improve participants’ quality of life by securing housing, employment, and income/benefits.³ A 2023 systematic review of 47 LEAD-like programs (i.e., police-led pre-arrest or pre-booking diversion programs) found that overall these programs reduce recidivism and lower costs.⁴

LEAD In Practice: Lessons Learned from the LEAD San Francisco Pilot

In our 2017 evaluation of a police-led LEAD pilot in San Francisco (SF), CA, we compared 98 LEAD program participants and 98 matched individuals on five recidivism outcomes: citations, felony arrests, misdemeanor arrests, felony cases, and misdemeanor cases.⁵

Similar to other evaluations, our results showed that LEAD was effective in reducing recidivism for LEAD participants compared to individuals who were not referred to LEAD. At the 12-month mark, felony and misdemeanor arrests, as well as felony cases, were all higher for the comparison group.

The successful outcomes observed in our evaluation of LEAD SF are likely attributable to the LEAD warm hand-off, stakeholder collaboration, and harm-reduction principles.⁶ Through our conversations with program staff, including case managers and law enforcement, we learned that the collaborative nature of LEAD brought together stakeholders (e.g., law enforcement and case managers) who might not ordinarily work together. This resulted in an enhanced understanding of each other's roles and the ability to serve LEAD clients. Officers particularly commented that the warm hand-off allowed them to connect individuals to a case manager quickly and viewed this as a unique and valuable component of the LEAD model.

Other program stakeholders attributed clients' success to harm reduction principles. Because harm reduction focuses more on minimizing the harms associated with risky behaviors and less on reaching a particular set of outcomes, LEAD SF case managers were able to meet clients where they were and celebrate client successes, no matter how small (e.g., taking a shower, going to the DMV to get a new ID card, etc.).

Despite the successes of LEAD SF, the program encountered several challenges throughout the implementation of LEAD and no longer operates in that jurisdiction. LEAD SF faced challenges with securing officer buy-in and maintaining open lines of communication. The cultural shift associated with embracing a LEAD model approach, the lack of clarity surrounding LEAD goals and principles, the expansion of criteria to include felonies, and the lack of ongoing harm reduction training for officers likely impeded buy-in. We found that officers were not well-versed in the principles of harm reduction, which contributed to their hesitancy to embrace a model with no definitive outcomes, such as desistance from drug use.

Another contributing factor leading to the termination of LEAD was a deviation in program fidelity. At the time LEAD SF was implemented, LEAD was strictly a police-led program, unlike the shift in the LEAD model we see today. The LEAD SF site deviated from the original LEAD model when it introduced a third referral avenue, whereby staff from a local initiative program were able to refer eligible individuals to LEAD, resulting in SF operating a LEAD program that was not, in fact, LEAD. Case managers lamented that this additional referral mechanism interfered with the warm hand-off, which case managers and police officers described as a crucial component of LEAD.

The challenges experienced in LEAD SF are not at all unique to SF, and other qualitative studies have documented similar barriers, particularly in relation to officer buy-in and ambiguity in goals and the referral process. Still, existing evidence lends support to LEAD's effectiveness as an alternative policing approach that not only diverts individuals from the revolving door of the criminal legal system but

also improves their quality of life. Thus, we advise sites to consider the following criteria when deciding whether to implement a LEAD program:

1. Assess the need for LEAD: LEAD is an alternative that has the potential to positively expand police officers' toolkit to reduce their reliance on arrest as a primary response to drugs and related crimes in their community. Interested sites should carefully assess the applicability of LEAD in their jurisdiction. Because LEAD was initially designed to address low-level drug-related crimes, jurisdictions that currently do not arrest or prosecute individuals for these types of crimes (e.g., misdemeanor drug-related crimes and/or drug-related sex work) may encounter challenges in finding eligible LEAD participants. LEAD SF faced this challenge, leading to the site expanding its eligibility criteria to include certain felonies. This expansion contributed to officers' caution to embrace the LEAD model. Further, it raised the question of whether the observed success in LEAD SF was the result of the LEAD model or the inclusion of felonies as eligible crimes.

2. Secure officer buy-in prior to implementation: Securing officer buy-in is a fundamental—albeit challenging—task that is necessary prior to LEAD implementation. We recommend that sites start small; LEAD sites should first engage with champion leaders in their police department before expanding the LEAD tool to other officers. Best practices suggest that champion staff (i.e., staff who are well-liked and respected by others) may be more likely to encourage others to adopt the model. As sites begin to do the groundwork to secure buy-in, they should consider the culture of the police department and whether the department's values align with the LEAD model, particularly around the principles of harm reduction.

3. Build a transparent, equitable, and frequent communication plan among the stakeholders and require both LEAD procedure and harm reduction trainings for law enforcement: Thorough and ongoing training on LEAD procedures and harm reduction principles is essential. Our pilot demonstrated that ambiguity surrounding LEAD goals and procedures contributed to officers' hesitancy to buy into the LEAD model. We recommend that sites have well-defined procedures prior to LEAD implementation and that any changes to these protocols be effectively communicated to all, especially officers who will be leading the program. Officers should receive ongoing training on these procedures as well as in harm reduction principles. A key component of harm reduction, and at the core of LEAD, is meeting people where they are. Comprehensive trainings and a thorough understanding of harm reduction can help manage officers' expectations about what success under the LEAD model looks like. Ultimately, the goal of LEAD is to divert people from the criminal legal system and offer services to improve their well-being, and not necessarily abstinence from drugs or related behaviors. This could potentially shift officer perceptions of people who use drugs, redefine success for those referred to LEAD, and promote officer buy-in.

Final Thoughts

Evidence-based arrest alternatives, like LEAD, provide officers with a new tool that they can use to redirect individuals in need away from the harms of the criminal legal system and into services that can improve their quality of life and reduce recidivism. With proper training and education, a harm reduction police-led LEAD model has the

potential to pave the way for future reform. Individuals dealing with behavioral/mental health problems and/or income/housing instability are more likely to first encounter the police than they are service providers. As a result, police are in a unique position to reshape their role as first responders using LEAD by meeting the individual where they are and putting the needs of these individuals first.

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Applying “What Works” to Stop Violence and Save Lives

BY THOMAS ABT AND GRACE MAGORI

Thomas Abt is the Founding Director of the Center for the Study and Practice of Violence Reduction (VRC) at the University of Maryland, where he is also an Associate Research Professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice. Grace Magori is the VRC’s Program Manager.

Gun violence is now the leading cause of death for young people under age 28, overtaking motor vehicle accidents and drug overdoses.¹ While the majority of gun deaths are suicides, most gun homicides can be attributed to violence perpetrated with firearms in community settings. The costs of this violence to impacted individuals, families, and communities are staggering. Studies estimate the average total social cost of a single homicide to be \$10 million or more.² The human costs of such violence are, of course, unquantifiable.

Evaluation studies have identified strategies to combat gun violence that produce positive outcomes when implemented with fidelity. Evidence-informed strategies like focused deterrence, hot spots policing, and cognitive behavioral therapy are supported by dozens of studies employing multiple methods, many of which are summarized in systematic reviews.³ Nevertheless, these strategies remain sporadically adopted and rarely sustained.

The Center for the Study and Practice of Violence Reduction (VRC) was established in November 2022 to support and improve the translation and use of this research, especially in the area of community gun violence. The VRC reviews research, summarizes it, and then makes it available in accessible formats, with two Campbell Collaboration systematic reviews of anti-violence strategies underway and nearing completion.⁴ The VRC also provides practical instruction to local jurisdictions (currently including Knoxville, Boston, and the St. Louis region, but adding more) on how to choose the right combination of anti-violence strategies to match their circumstances. Here, we describe some of those translational efforts.

Synthesizing and Translating Evidence to Address Community Gun Violence

How does the VRC synthesize and translate evidence concerning community gun violence for the benefit of its local partners? To help us answer this question, we interviewed senior representatives from each jurisdiction we currently work with: LaKenya Middlebrook, director of community safety for the City of Knoxville; Isaac Yablo, senior advisor for community safety to Boston Mayor Michelle Wu;



Thomas Abt



Grace Magori

and Jim Wild, executive director of the East-West Gateway Council of Governments for the St. Louis region.

To start, the VRC engages with mayors from prospective jurisdictions

and their senior staff to ensure their alignment in terms of goals, values, and expectations for reducing community gun violence. The relationship is entirely voluntary—the VRC provides its services for free, and local officials are under no obligation to accept or follow VRC recommendations. Only when all parties believe that engagement is in their own interest does the effort move forward. The VRC’s financial and political independence enables us to communicate directly and freely in a manner that might not otherwise be possible.

Once agreement is reached, planning begins for a Practicum for Partnership-Based Violence Reduction. In each city, the mayor’s office and the VRC bring together local community leaders, law enforcement officials, and service providers, among others. We pair these leaders with nationally recognized anti-violence experts who train them in the collaborative selection, implementation, and coordination of evidence-informed anti-violence strategies.

The practicum begins with data. Research consistently demonstrates that community gun violence clusters around small groups of people, places, and behaviors. Fatal and nonfatal shootings concentrate in and among small networks of individuals and groups, leading to cascading effects of retaliatory violence.⁵ Crime and violence also converge in and around small numbers of locations.⁶ Finally, certain risky behaviors, such as illegal gun carrying, are closely associated with violence.⁷ City leaders often need to learn this for themselves, from their own data.

For this reason, we conduct *community violence problem analyses* for each jurisdiction. These analyses identify the people and places disproportionately involved in violence, as well as the motivations for such violence. Many local leaders are surprised to learn how concentrated their violence is, both in terms of demography and geography (see Figure 1 for an example of our analysis in Knoxville). They often find that the typical violent offender (and victim) is older than they may have expected, with an average age of over 25, and with a long

history of criminal justice involvement. Finally, they learn that many violent incidents are not directly connected to organized criminal behavior but instead arise from more everyday disputes.

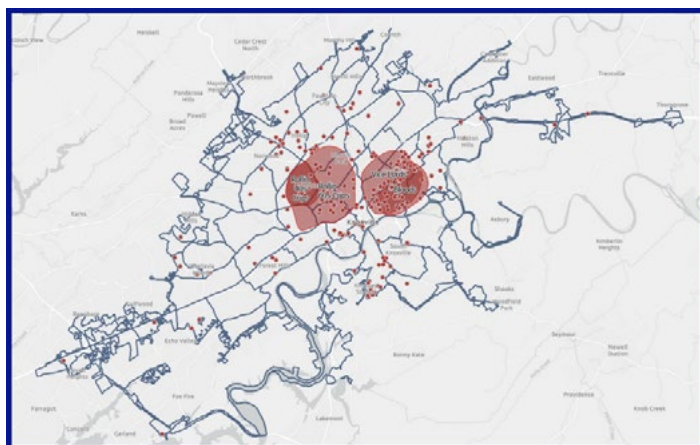


Figure 1: Gun violence incidents and group areas in Knoxville

All three interviewees found the problem analysis to be integral in distinguishing preconceived notions about community violence in their communities from reality. “The problem analysis helped me justify the inclusion of people and the allocation of resources,” said Boston’s Isaac Yablo. “Funding, people, power, bandwidth for the populations at most risk for violence... The analysis is the basis.”

After the analysis, the VRC starts with *overarching principles* to guide local efforts before jumping into specific strategies. *Anti-violence efforts should be focused on the highest risk people, places, and behaviors, balanced between enforcement, services and supports, and perceived as legitimate by those most impacted.*⁸ “Those principles are drilled in from the beginning,” said Knoxville’s LaKenya Middlebrook. “Having those principles guiding the work at each stage



Boston Practicum

ensures that the work is naturally embedded with these values.” After that, the VRC introduces specific strategies. Leading academics like Phillip Cook from Duke University and Daniel Webster from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health provide virtual lectures followed by Q&A. Nationally recognized practitioners including David Muhammad from the National Institute of Criminal Justice Reform and James Timpson of Roca, Inc., do the same. Through these sessions, participants are introduced to a select set of anti-violence strategies that are either promising or proven to work.

“The curriculum was good and thought out. It helped to have some of the different presenters and speakers, even if they were virtual,” noted St. Louis’ Jim Wild. “There’s skepticism from some people, but most agreed that if we weren’t changing anything, we weren’t going to get different results.”

The practicum concludes with *guided planning sessions* to help participants select the strategies they believe will work best for their particular jurisdiction. Once agreement is reached, it is memorialized in a “plan-to-plan”—a short document that offers a summary of the agreement and outlines the next steps stakeholders will take to save lives. “You consume a lot of information in a short amount of time and go through that experience individually and as a group,” said Middlebrook. “Recognizing that it is a collaboration... there will be push and pull, but we worked through what strategies we thought would be most effective.” Some jurisdictions already have anti-violence plans that the VRC can update and augment; if no plan exists, the VRC helps build one from scratch.



St. Louis Practicum

After the practicum is over, *implementation* begins immediately. Locally-led implementation teams and advisory groups are formed, additional staff are hired, and funds are raised or made available. The VRC continues to assist jurisdictions remotely, regularly meeting virtually with mayoral staff and others, reviewing plans, and offering feedback. Another critical step in the process is the identification of high-quality training and technical assistance providers to guide the implementation of specific strategies. Most evidence-informed strategies are complex, and additional expertise from outside the jurisdiction is often needed, at least temporarily, to guide initial efforts. “I think how the VRC stands out is that they stay with you all through the process,” stated Wild. “Every city and region is a little different, and they accommodate for that—they’re not giving you a generic answer.”

For example, in Knoxville, local leaders are implementing a three-pronged approach: a group violence initiative, localized police-community partnerships, and community outreach. These efforts are underway as centerpieces of Mayor Indya Kincannon’s violence reduction plan. Boston’s strategy includes regular incident review meetings, engaging high-risk individuals with services and supports, and increasing police presence and investment in high-risk micro-locations, all of which are currently being implemented in Mayor

Wu's gun violence reduction strategy. St. Louis elected officials decided on a regional plan featuring focused deterrence, cognitive behavioral therapy, and street outreach, which is being implemented by a new regional effort known as SaveLivesNow!⁹ In all three cities, implementation teams meet weekly or biweekly, and advisory groups—chaired by the mayors and/or county executives—meet monthly or quarterly.

The VRC's approach clearly works from a process standpoint. We have engaged three jurisdictions and held three practica that produced three “plan-to-plans,” all of which are being actively implemented by local leaders. But from an impact standpoint, is the VRC's approach actually helping to stop violence and save lives?

Evaluating complex efforts like these is notoriously difficult, as there are similarities and differences between each jurisdiction's approach, and the work has just started. Regardless, the initial numbers are encouraging. In Knoxville, where the VRC has been working since December 2022, homicides plummeted 33% in 2023 compared to the year before. In Boston, where we have been working since April 2023, homicides are down 78% so far this year. In St. Louis, the regional effort began less than a year ago in December 2023 and is poised for success with a goal of a 20% reduction in homicides and shootings over the next three years. We hope to more rigorously assess our performance soon using a mixed-method evaluation approach, possibly using synthetic controls to create comparison groups.

Even if the VRC is ultimately able to establish a positive impact, most of the credit in these three jurisdictions go to the local leaders and stakeholders working hard to make a difference on the ground. Knoxville Mayor Kincannon, Boston Mayor Wu, St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones, and St. Louis County Executive Sam Page, as key convenors and implementers, deserve special mentions for their critically needed leadership.

Key Takeaways from the VRC's Experience

- **Local leadership is essential.** Mayors, city managers, and/or county executives must take an active and ongoing role in order to ensure success.
- **Have the right people in the room.** Stakeholders with diverse backgrounds must come together and be willing to work with one another. Go with problem-solvers, not bomb-throwers.
- **Begin with analysis.** If local stakeholders do not adequately understand their problem, they cannot create appropriate solutions.
- Introduce principles before programs. It is helpful to orient local stakeholders first around key principles before jumping into discussions about specific programs.
- **Keep it simple.** Local stakeholders cannot implement more than 3 to 4 programs simultaneously. Include only the most important strategies in your plan.
- **Don't do it alone.** For each specific component of the plan, seek

high-quality training and technical assistance from reputable providers with demonstrated experience.

- **Build capacity for implementation.** Build internal capacity for management and oversight in mayor's offices and elsewhere.

According to Yablo, “Being a nonpartisan entity delivering cold, raw truth is a perfect niche that cities need. The VRC steps in to clear the nonsense, leaving only what matters.” To date, the VRC's approach appears to be working, but there is more to be done and learned. As our approach is grounded in science, the work itself is an experiment and one that we hope will deliver positive outcomes and learning experiences along the way.

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Empowering Community Organizations to Co-Produce Public Safety

BY ALEJANDRO GIMÉNEZ-SANTANA

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The police killing of George Floyd during his arrest on May 25, 2020 ignited a movement across the United States and around the globe, demanding extensive police reforms, an end to systemic racism, and more investment in community solutions for public safety. Police often agree that it is not their job to address the underlying social conditions that give rise to crime, and that it is unfair to expect them to solve what is fundamentally a social safety net problem with the crude tools of crime fighting. Meanwhile, community activists have long demanded an expansion of civic engagement programs that involve the public in enhancing community safety and wellness. In the City of Newark, New Jersey, community organizations and law enforcement have developed a collaborative ecosystem that engages multiple stakeholders in the co-production of public safety.

From Community Policing to the Co-production of Public Safety

Most community policing efforts share a common characteristic: the police agency controls both the message and the data that inform public safety priorities. However, these priorities do not necessarily align with community expectations and the process of community collaboration may lack transparency. Community policing is considered a philosophy rather than a structured process with varying interpretations across audiences. For police departments, it might mean a neighborhood unit with dedicated officers or a complete overhaul of an entire agency and its mission. Some community advocates may interpret it to mean residents actively participating in neighborhood watch groups and addressing safety concerns, while others may see it as a form of civic engagement where residents are encouraged to report suspicious activity to the police.

Co-production efforts, in contrast, seek to level the playing field between community organizations and law enforcement so that they can work collaboratively toward mutually agreed goals. Former Assistant Attorney General Amy Solomon recently noted that “people and institutions with deep roots in the communities hardest hit by violence have a meaningful role in bringing the public safety agenda to life in the neighborhoods they serve.”¹ This requires the direct, proactive engagement and participation of a diverse group of



Alejandro
Giménez-Santana

community-based organizations (CBOs) and other local stakeholders in the decision-making process and strategic allocation of resources and expertise at the places most impacted by crime—efforts that have traditionally been led by the police with minor input from those most impacted by crime.² The co-production of public safety seeks to change this reality by amplifying the role of community organizations in creating safer and more resilient communities.

In 2018, the Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC)³, a Rutgers University-Newark Anchor Initiative, launched a collaborative effort aimed at improving public safety through data-informed community engagement in the City of Newark. Over six years, the NPSC has brought together forty-five local stakeholders, including CBOs, police, local government, and businesses. The NPSC’s mission is to: (1) democratize the use of data and analytics, (2) empower community organizations to become co-producers of public safety, and (3) mobilize community resources and expertise to solve Newark’s most pressing crime issues, offering an alternative to traditional community policing practices.

Democratizing Access to Data and Analytics to Ignite Community Responses

Public access to police and crime data remains limited, with few police departments disclosing incident-level data through open data portals. In contrast, academics and researchers enjoy ample access to crime data to produce valuable research with real-life implications. Unfortunately, this research doesn’t always reach its intended audience, with CBOs and other local stakeholders lacking access to research journals or the skills to interpret complex data results. Here is where the role of translational researchers in participatory action research becomes critical. These experts are uniquely qualified to disseminate evidence-based practices to assist community stakeholders in their decision-making processes. In her opening remarks at the 2022 American Society of Criminology (ASC) conference, National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Director Nancy La Vigne discussed the importance of inclusive research, which involves listening to the people closest to the issue and “bringing the data back to the stakeholders.”⁴ Translating evidence into practice is critical to understanding the role of data in co-production efforts for public safety.

We know from research that crime problems concentrate at very small places,⁵ where people’s everyday activities create unique opportunities for crime to emerge.⁶ Crime generators and attractors

(CGAs), such as bodegas or abandoned buildings, influence opportunities by drawing people to these locations. Recent innovations in place-based analysis techniques, such as hot spot analysis or Risk Terrain Modeling (RTM),⁷ provide a simple and direct mechanism to interpret crime data, helping stakeholders form narratives that explain why crime persists at certain places.

This evidence has long assisted law enforcement agencies in their efforts to reduce crime near “hot spots” where illegal behaviors concentrate, but much less attention has been paid to the expertise and experience of CBOs as co-producers of public safety. These organizations, rooted in the communities most affected by crime, are uniquely positioned to participate in public safety discussions. Community members’ lived experiences can shape the narratives about crime at places that translate into concrete solutions. CBOs can also provide access to critical community services such as youth mentoring, mental health support, drug overdose prevention, and homeless services. Providing these organizations with free and direct access to place-based insights can validate personal observations, catalyze

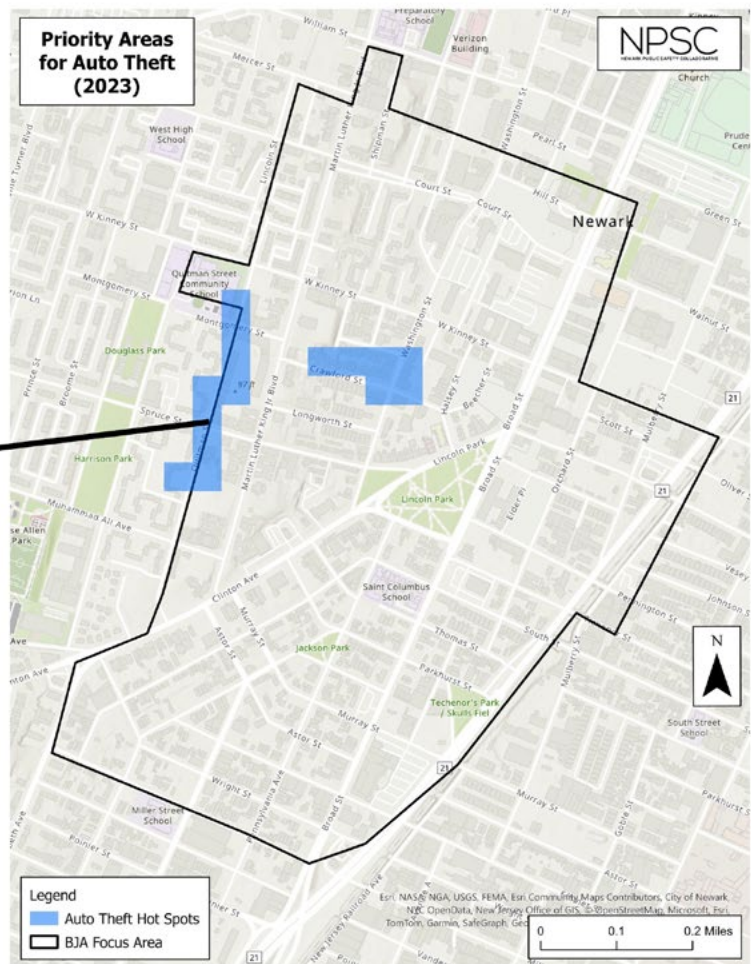
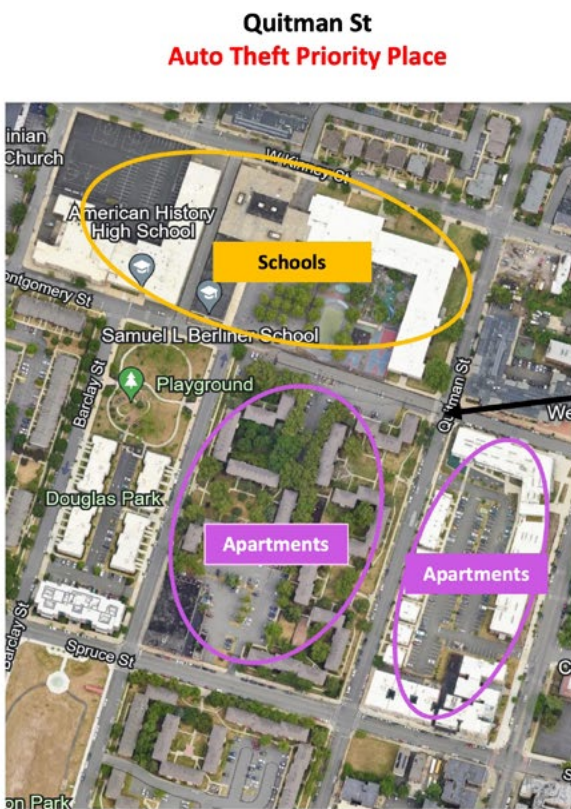
conversations, and empower community stakeholders to engage in problem-solving activities that get existing resources to where they are most needed.

By “democratizing” data and analytics, and making them more accessible, community stakeholders are empowered to make data-informed decisions and engage in problem-solving activities. In the City of Newark, CBOs receive ongoing access to data and place-based analyses to inform their programs and activities. This information has played a crucial role in supporting multiple co-produced crime prevention efforts, including reducing the risk of gun violence near bodegas, drastically reducing the number of auto thefts in various hot spots, and significantly decreasing nighttime violent crime through enhanced street lighting.⁸

Case Study: Co-producing Public Safety to Reduce and Prevent Auto Thefts

Auto thefts across the United States skyrocketed in 2023, driven by an unprecedented increase in thefts of Kias and Hyundais. A video

Figure 1. Aerial and Map Views of Lincoln Park, Newark

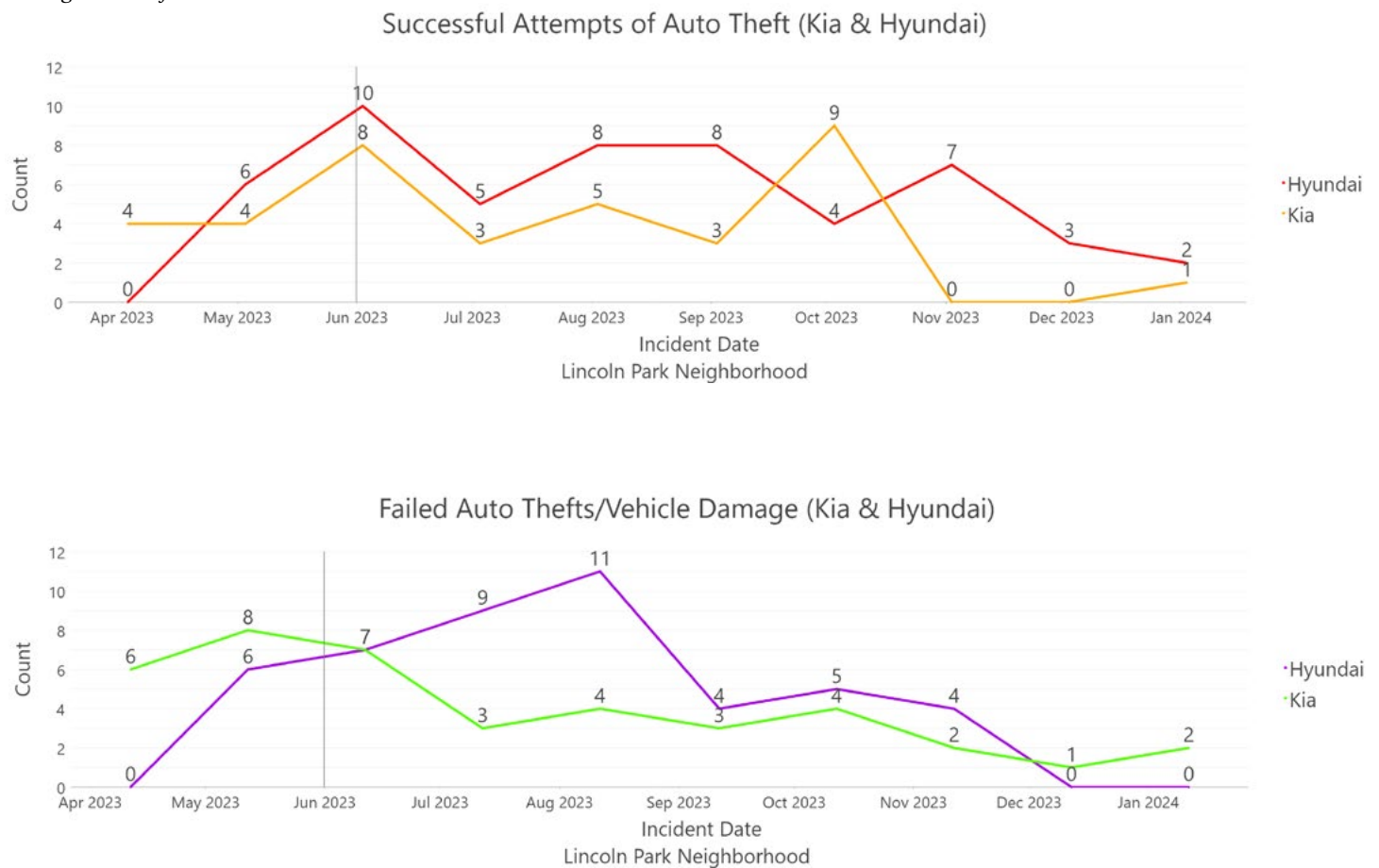


widely shared on social media exposed a vulnerability in the ignition system of these vehicles, making them a popular target for offenders across the country. To address the rise in Newark, NPSC partners, including CBOs, law enforcement, and other local stakeholders, launched a co-produced effort to increase public awareness of the issue. Informed by the past success of a similar NPSC campaign in 2020 to reduce auto thefts due to people leaving cars running unattended,⁹ NPSC produced an informational flyer to share tips on how Kia and Hyundai owners could reduce their risk of victimization by updating the vehicle's security system or obtaining a free steering wheel lock at their local police precinct. The flyers were distributed across eight CBOs, police precincts, and local businesses, along with a detailed report identifying data-informed priority areas for dissemination.

NPSC's analysis found that Newark's Lincoln Park neighborhood had the highest citywide concentration of Kia and Hyundai car thefts in 2023. To respond to this problem, the local nonprofit Lincoln Park Coast Cultural District (LPCCD) led a localized co-production effort to reduce and prevent auto thefts in their community. LPCCD's outreach focused on engaging residents and other organizations to increase public awareness by prioritizing their efforts in specific small areas (see Figure 1). A second strategy in collaboration with law enforcement involved distributing car stickers indicating that the vehicle had received the latest security update to help deter motivated offenders.

Auto thefts in Lincoln Park were also concentrated close to two high schools, prompting a third strategy directed at engaging youth attending these schools. In partnership with school advisors, the

Figure 2: Project Evaluation



LPCCD and the Newark Opportunity Youth Network (NOYN) organized various community meetings to engage students in the data and understand their perceptions of the problem. Youth identified peer pressure from other students as contributing to the problem, with peers wanting to “show off.” Other students linked the increased levels of thefts of Kias and Hyundais to racing and joyriding. They proposed several solutions, including improving access to driver’s education programs, youth mentoring, and more access to services.

NPSC looked at the counts of Kia and Hyundai thefts in the main target areas before and after these strategies were implemented. These co-produced efforts reduced successful thefts of these vehicles by 80% within six months of the program’s launch (Figure 2). The second graph, which shows attempted auto thefts, shows an increase in *failed* Hyundai theft attempts after the program launched. This increase can be attributed to residents taking preventive measures to

reduce the vulnerabilities present in their vehicles. Ultimately, both attempted and failed counts went down toward the end of the year, showing that co-produced crime prevention is a promising strategy to disrupt auto thefts in the longer term.

Amid widespread calls to reimagine public safety, Newark offers a prime example of how community-inclusive solutions can be an alternative to traditional enforcement mechanisms. The data-informed community engagement approach tested and implemented by the NPSC supports co-production to improve community safety. By democratizing access to data and analytics, community organizations are empowered to fully engage in problem-solving activities. Collectively, local stakeholders can pool their resources and expertise toward producing community safety and wellness. The result is an improvement in police-community relations and better public safety.

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On-The-Ground Lessons from Launching Cure Violence in Southwest Philadelphia

BY SARA SOLOMON, DENISE JOHNSON,
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The Department of Justice has invested over \$200 million in Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs across the country over the last two years,¹ making CVIs a visible and prominent crime reduction strategy. Agencies that have obtained funding to implement CVIs range from community-based grassroots organizations to more established governmental agencies and academic institutions. Evidence on the effectiveness of CVIs is limited, with outcomes varying depending on the specific location, even within the same city.^{2,3} For example, one prominent CVI, Cure Violence (formerly Ceasefire), has been replicated in at least 13 communities globally, although the results of its impact vary across studies and neighborhoods.^{4,5} Mixed results have led researchers and practitioners to question its effectiveness and consider whether factors such as implementation challenges, funding stability, the political landscape, and public support, impact the program's success.³

To our knowledge, no rigorous examination has been conducted on how differences in Cure Violence implementation and context influence outcomes. Yet, the procedures and practices employed by the implementing agency during the initiation of Cure Violence may play a crucial role in the program's success. Since 2022, the University of Pennsylvania has been working to adapt and implement Cure Violence in Southwest Philadelphia through the Penn Community Violence Prevention (PCVP) program. Here, we offer guiding principles (see Figure 1) with examples to assist other agencies as they launch similar programs. Our insights are based on the perspective of an academic institution serving as the implementing agency and guided by the exploration and preparation phases in the EPIS Implementation Framework (Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment).⁶ In this article, we focus on the early phases of the project that do not typically get discussed but that could impact program success.



(Left to Right) Sara Solomon, Elijah Tadlock, Denise Johnson, and Andre Ali Martin

Figure 1. Guiding Principles from Exploration to Early Implementation Exploration Phase: Determining Fit, Capacity and Readiness for CVI Implementation

- Determine the organizational fit with particular attention to the historical context.
- Ensure sustainable funding sources at the outset to avoid program disruption.
- Examine the capacity to implement CVI work with a focus on practical aspects like hiring policies, transportation, and safety protocols.
- Evaluate organizational culture, climate, and readiness for change.

Preparation Phase: Identifying needs and developing efficient systems

- Assess the needs and assets of the targeted community (ies).
- Identify partnership opportunities to provide support and resources.
- Budget for emergency services and participant needs.
- Develop efficient systems for hiring and onboarding.
- Create safety protocols for team members in the field.

Early Implementation: Staff onboarding and community partnerships

- Provide comprehensive training, including shadowing and role-playing.
- Emphasize trauma-informed care, professional development, and staff wellness.
- Engage with the community to understand preferences and build relationships.
- Use feedback from staff and advisory boards to adapt the intervention to the local context.

In our case, it was essential to *acknowledge the historical context* and deeply rooted mistrust between our academic institution and neighboring communities. We recognized this from the outset when community members hesitated to participate and commented negatively about the University. To offset this, we committed to being transparent in our work and developed a set of internal values centered upon trust and recognizing the community as experts. We hired individuals from the community and relied upon their lived experiences to inform our work. We also created a continual presence in the community by canvassing streets at least three times a week and listened to the concerns of community members without getting defensive. Despite these efforts, it was difficult to counter mistrust with some community members, particularly on issues such as gentrification that were out of our control. The Principles of Trustworthiness Toolkit⁷ may serve as a useful guide for others.⁸

Securing sustainable funding is crucial. Limited-term grants help launch new programs but leave agencies vulnerable to funding gaps, resulting in communities losing services and perceiving neglect. We anticipated continued funding from the original source, which forced us to scramble for alternative funding when the funds did not come through. Ideally, the institution should allocate internal resources and provide a sustainable commitment to ensure the program's longevity.

Consider the implementing agency's internal capacity to support the CVI. This capacity can range from human to operational resources. For instance, we did not have space readily available within the target community to enhance visibility and serve as a meeting spot for critical stakeholders. We successfully partnered with organizations that could provide this support. We also lacked access to a company vehicle, making it difficult to transport participants to and from locations, which is important for case management. Instead, we had to rely on staff using their personal vehicles, which is not ideal from a liability and resource standpoint.

The culture and climate within an implementation agency matter. For example, the success of CVIs hinge on the lived experiences of the staff, and involving individuals with histories of violence, crime, and incarceration. In our experience, even after navigating the process of hiring staff with criminal backgrounds, it wasn't easy to find supportive resources within the University for on-the-job training skills such as computer literacy. It is essential to determine if the implementing agency (in our case, the University) can create a supportive environment that embraces diverse backgrounds. The agency should also invest in training and resources to ensure staff success.

Finally, assessing readiness for change is essential if the culture or climate is not a fit. This commitment to change must come from everyone involved (e.g., leadership, program implementors, and business administrators). For example, we worked closely with legal and human resource administrators to develop efficient systems for hiring and training credible messengers and adding non-standard budget line items such as emergency resources for participants and staff. Engaging leaders and ensuring commitment before the work begins can smooth these transitions.

Preparation Phase: Identifying Needs and Developing Efficient Systems Before Implementation

Once the fit is confirmed, *assessing needs and existing resources* provides a strong foundation for successful implementation. Talk to residents and community leaders to understand community needs, preferences, and existing assets to build upon and identify potential barriers to implementation. For example, we realized there was a lack of opportunity for physical activity and recreation in our target community. Had we known this earlier, we would have focused on building relationships with key stakeholders, such as the City of Philadelphia's Parks and Recreation Department.

Examining opportunities for partnerships is necessary to support the work. We partnered with the trauma center to offer participants referrals and partner on outreach activities. We particularly benefited from relationships with schools, recreation centers, and social service agencies that could provide employee readiness, employment linkages, and housing or relocation services. We also relied upon external networks such as city coalitions and hospital-based CVI programs. For example, we leveraged a relationship with a service provider to bypass long waiting lines for therapeutic services. Additionally, we worked with the Office of School Safety at the School District of Philadelphia, which brokered relationships with families, helped identify needs among young people, and offered space within the community.

We also learned that in this type of work, **researchers and practitioners should anticipate and budget for emergency costs**, such as needing to provide housing for clients or covering services related to attaining employment (e.g., clothing, transportation) or medical needs (e.g., medications). For example, when assisting with job placements, we often provided funds to help individuals buy professional clothes for an interview or cover transportation costs. Additionally, many participants required funds for certifications or renewing their driver's licenses to assist with their goals. We also helped with housing for safety and covered costs associated with funerals.

Having a substantial part of the budget dedicated to these "emergency supplies" was a critical part of case management. However, it took effort on the backend to develop mechanisms to distribute funds to individuals efficiently. We utilized an internal debit card system to register funds for immediate access to eligible participants, allowing them to access cash without waiting for a check.

Developing policies and systems for hiring and onboarding are critical to hiring people with criminal backgrounds. Internal policies had to be reviewed or created before the hiring process could commence. Decisions to hire individuals often had to be justified and documented, demonstrating how the individual has transitioned away from a life of violence. It was often helpful if the employee had volunteer experience or had undergone training or certifications, even if these took place in prison. This was an iterative process between the hiring manager and the potential employee, which should be built into a timeline and communicated transparently to avoid losing potential employees. From the employees' perspective,

knowing how long the process would take and what documentation was required ahead of time would have been helpful.

Creating safety protocols to ensure the safety of our team members is another priority. We developed safety protocols with procedures in place for safely canvassing the community. For example, we incorporated a buddy system and required staff to wear uniforms to ensure they were visible and easily identified as part of the program. We also required staff to check-in with their supervisor if they deviated from the locations on our schedule as a safety measure.

Early Implementation: Staff Onboarding and Community Partnerships

Adequate time before full implementation dedicated to comprehensive team training is necessary to build skills and allow the team to develop a sense of camaraderie. There may be free or paid training opportunities. We took advantage of the free training available through the City of Philadelphia's Behavioral Health Training and Education Network⁹ and a local university-based Cure Violence team. This allowed for easy access to trainers, who served as local mentors and trusted colleagues. Staff particularly benefited from the hands-on observations and shadowing that took place in the field. Additionally, simulated scenarios helped orient staff to common challenges and occurrences and was more advantageous than classroom-based didactic learning. Further, trauma-based training and mental health first aid were highly valuable. In addition, training in data entry, computer literacy, and professional etiquette was required.

It is crucial to emphasize trauma-informed staff wellness early on, as many team members come from traumatic backgrounds and work in trauma daily. Staff should be equipped with strategies to manage stress and avoid burnout. This includes regular debriefing sessions, access to mental health resources, and creating a supportive work environment that prioritizes employee well-being. The U.S. Office for Victims of Crime offers a toolkit for addressing vicarious trauma and sustaining a healthy and effective workforce.¹⁰ We also planned for staff wellness activities based on the preferences of our team. These included team outings and shared meals, emphasizing the importance of taking days off, and backing away from situations that were triggering.

Adapting and co-creating CVI activities with a Community Advisory Board (CAB) allowed for input from organizational leaders, advocates, and organizations in the catchment area. We asked team members to identify and recruit potential candidates for the board. We then identified gaps by sectors represented (e.g., business, schools) and invited additional participants. We met monthly with advisory board members and conducted interviews and surveys with additional community stakeholders to understand which components of the intervention were deemed impactful and identify barriers to implementation. Working with a CAB allowed for the creation of a "community within a community," and members expressed gratitude for having their

voices heard. We now have a tight-knit community to draw upon, share resources, and identify partnership opportunities.

Conclusion

The journey from exploration to implementation of Cure Violence in Southwest Philadelphia underscores the complexity of tailored, community-centric approaches. This is particularly important due to the recent professionalism of CVI work and the expansion of CVIs within a broad range of implementing agencies, including academic institutions. In our experience, we learned that assessing organizational fit, securing sustainable funding, leveraging interagency networks, ensuring organizational readiness, supporting staff training, and engaging with the community early in implementation were critical implementation strategies. We hope our lessons provide a valuable framework, and note that the United States Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs offers a helpful implementation checklist for setting up CVIs.¹¹

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What Do We Know About State School Safety Centers?

BY ASHLEY BOAL & JOSEPH MCKENNA

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Tragedies such as those in 2018 at Marjory Stoneham Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Santa Fe High School in Texas, and more recent tragedies in Oxford, Michigan and Uvalde, Texas, continue to raise national concern about school safety. More than 40 states have created task forces or commissions to examine school safety, and nearly all states have passed legislation to address school safety since the Parkland mass shooting.

One vehicle used to maintain an organized and consolidated effort at the state level to address school safety has been state school safety centers (SSSCs). SSSCs generally seek to be the centralized state unit that provides a wide range of services to enhance the safety and security of schools under that state's jurisdiction. Many states have demonstrated an interest in establishing such centers,¹ and the federal government has supported these efforts.² However, what do we know about SSSCs, and how can they be effective?

To answer this question, WestEd's Justice and Prevention Research Center (JPRC) conducted the first empirical evaluation of SSSCs.³ To develop data-driven answers to critical questions about SSSCs, we surveyed school safety informants from 43 states to better understand each state's school safety landscape. We also conducted interviews and surveys with nearly every director of a currently operational SSSC to gather details about the history, characteristics, and services of those SSSCs. We also distributed a survey to a random sample of superintendents and principals in each state with a current SSSC to ask about awareness, use, and perceptions of their SSSC, receiving responses from 4,167 superintendents and principals, representing 20% of those invited to participate in the survey. Finally, we conducted interviews with SSSC service users to gather in-depth information about stakeholder experiences with their SSSCs.

What Did We Learn About SSSCs?

To begin, despite the widespread use of SSSCs, even those most familiar with their state's school safety landscape defined the purpose of SSSCs differently. To promote a shared language, we developed a definition of SSSCs *as a state-level resource that is funded either through state appropriations or state/federal grant funds, or some combination of the two, that at a minimum serves the entire state as a central clearinghouse for school safety information and resources, but that also may provide technical*



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assistance, training, and/or develop resources to support local education agency school safety efforts. Using this definition, states can have more than one SSSC. Of the 43 states included in the

study, 30 (70%) currently have at least one operational SSSC. Most of these SSSCs were established in the 2000s.

About two-thirds of the SSSCs studied were established because state legislation required their creation. Often, legislation establishing an SSSC was passed in response to highly publicized school violence incidents, including the mass casualty shootings at Columbine High School and Sandy Hook Elementary School. SSSC directors frequently noted that a substantial amount of school safety legislation in their state has been focused on emergency management requirements.

Most commonly, SSSCs are housed within state education agencies. However, SSSCs can also be housed in public safety, law enforcement, criminal justice, and other emergency operations departments. A minority of SSSCs divide responsibilities across multiple agencies or consist of multiple centers in multiple agencies or organizations that operate independently.

The majority of SSSCs have a relatively small staff. Over three-fourths of SSSC directors reported that their SSSC had fewer than ten staff members, and half reported having five or fewer. Most SSSCs utilize both full-time staff and contractors. SSSC staff tend to hold expertise in emergency management (59%), mental health (45%), and law enforcement (45%). Additional areas of expertise include threat assessment (31%), education (24%), research and evaluation (17%), school administration (10%), and school climate (3%). Three-fourths of SSSCs receive state appropriations to fund center work. However, approximately two-thirds of SSSCs have more than one funding source. Common sources of funding beyond state appropriations include both federal and state grants.

Nearly every SSSC provides technical assistance, training, and resource development for schools. These activities include providing guidance, offering resources, engaging in thought partnerships, and facilitating professional learning to enhance the knowledge and skill sets of educational leaders. The most common training topics include threat assessment, emergency management, and school policing. Two-thirds of SSSCs engaged in compliance activities (e.g., mandatory review of emergency operation plans, school safety survey administration), and nearly half administered grants (e.g., grants to support districts in schools to fund school resource officers or imple-

ment anti-bullying programs).

About three-fourths of district and school leaders are aware of their SSSCs. Superintendents (83%) were more likely to be aware of their state's SSSC compared to principals (69%). Of those who were aware of their SSSC, more than two-thirds have used their center's services in the past year, and often monthly or quarterly. Engaging in technical assistance, participating in training, and accessing resources are the most common types of SSSC services used by superintendents and principals. Across all types of SSSC services (e.g., technical assistance, training, compliance), superintendents and principals consistently rated the services they received as easy to access, useful, of high quality, aligned with safety needs, and valuable in making safety work more comprehensive.

Interestingly, only half agreed that their SSSC supports them to meet state safety requirements and use best practices. Common suggestions for improvement from regular users of SSSCs include increasing SSSC staff to increase center capacity; improving SSSC websites for easier navigation; refining existing SSSC resources to enhance readability (e.g., summaries, clear organization, bullet points); increasing outreach and marketing efforts to promote greater awareness of SSSC supports; and adding new supports related particularly to threat assessment, mental health, and training of new district and school leaders (e.g., a “boot camp” for those unfamiliar with school safety).



Promising Practices for SSSCs

Findings from WestEd's evaluation revealed four areas of promising practices. These practices are common among SSSCs that have achieved high awareness and use among intended users, as well as positive perceptions of support services. We highlight them below.

(1) Vision and mission. SSSCs should aim to serve as the state's school safety hub and integrate explicit language into their mission statement that reinforces this objective. This mission should include prioritizing the needs of stakeholders and being proactive in anticipating future needs and emerging issues in schools. SSSCs should also use data and research to understand and get feedback about the quality of their services and what might be needed to meet the needs of intended users. This may require the hiring of staff with research

and evaluation expertise.

(2) Structure and staffing. SSSCs should consider housing their services in a single agency or organization to avoid confusion about where to access school safety resources in the state. SSSCs should also consider how to diversify the funding streams that support their work (i.e., federal and state grants, state appropriations, and non-governmental funds). Ideally, SSSC staff should consist of a multidisciplinary team with expertise that goes beyond traditional school safety backgrounds, such as law enforcement or emergency management, and include those with education, mental and behavioral health, and research and evaluation backgrounds. Further, leveraging the work of other organizations working to improve school safety can build a deeper bench of expertise, as well as consistency in guidance and recommendations across organizations.

(3) Support services. SSSCs should offer a sufficient amount and variety of support and services to schools. Such services include providing frequent training and technical assistance, facilitating compliance with school safety policy, and, when possible, providing funding to support school districts' safety efforts. This requires staff to be knowledgeable on school safety legislation and its implications. Staff members—especially those equipped with knowledge from the research on school safety—can support policymakers in considering both evidence and feasibility as they develop school safety policy.

(4) Audience and outreach. SSSCs should consider focusing on a wider variety of audiences beyond district and school leaders to include school board members, law enforcement, first responders, parents, and students. Relatedly, SSSCs should leverage technology to circulate resources, announce trainings, and share information. This can be done through the strategic use of social media and well-designed, user-friendly websites.

Conclusion

This study is only the beginning of understanding and evaluating the effectiveness and work of SSSCs. While our study provides school safety practitioners, policymakers, and researchers with more knowledge about the current state of SSSCs, more tracking, research, and evaluation of SSSC efforts is needed to fully understand not only how they are used, but how they can be used in effective, evidence-based ways. Little is still known about the extent to which centers are effective in improving school safety or the extent to which the promising practices offered here influence school safety. Future work can explore these important questions.

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The 2024 International Summer School for Policing Scholars – Australia



The International Summer School for Policing Scholars (ISSPS) is an international collaboration between George Mason University's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy (CEBCP), the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR), and Arizona State University. The summer school brings together top doctoral students, policing scholars, and progressive policing leaders from around the world to help doctoral students interested in policing research build diverse skills and develop international networks to advance policing research. The summer school features an intense week of presentations, discussion, and activities designed to expose students to new perspectives on policing theory and methods, as well as cutting edge research on a number of topics in policing. Congratulations to the 2024 ISSPS Australia graduates!

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In Memoriam Richard Rosenfeld

BY JOEL WALLMAN

Richard Rosenfeld, the eminent criminologist long associated with the University of Missouri-St. Louis, died on January 8 of this year, some three months after being diagnosed with cancer.

Rick's stature in the field of criminology and his professional recognitions—presidency of the American Society of Criminology, winner of the Edwin H. Sutherland award for scholarly achievement, regular appointments to Department of Justice and National Science Foundation advisory and research groups—will already be known to most associates of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy. And those who had the good fortune to be among his acquaintances will already know that it took only a small dose for anyone who met Rick to want to keep knowing him, to be his friend, colleague, student, neighbor. He was a first-rate human being.

Rick was a master of quantitative analysis. But he was more than a number-cruncher. Read his presidential address, where he invokes Durkheim, Parsons, and Polanyi with the greatest of ease in making an eloquent case for the role of social institutions in the vicissitudes of crime.¹ This was the theme of his and Steve Messner's seminal *Crime and the American Dream*. Rick was no mere statistician. He was an intellectual.

His scholarly interests, and resulting contributions, were protean. Social inequality and crime, illicit markets and violence, policing practices, recidivism, and the relationship between economic trends and crime rates were perennial preoccupations. In recent years, he became especially interested in the potential usefulness of crime forecasting models. In these, his retirement years, post-2014, he exceeded the relentless pace of scholarship that he'd maintained during his long teaching career. He became a true titan of industry, publishing fully 40 articles after "retiring." There are the widely cited crime-trend reports he produced for the Council on Criminal Justice. Multiple crime forecasting reports—local, state, and national—written for the H. F. Guggenheim Foundation. A National Institute of Justice-funded study, published posthumously by CNA, of a focused-deterrence policing initiative in St. Louis. A Washington Post editorial he and his wife, Janet Lauritsen, also a highly regarded

criminologist, wrote about the troubling discrepancy between the Uniform Crime Report and the National Crime Victimization Survey crime numbers for 2022, published two months before his death. (This was far from the first editorial Rick penned, several of which were in the service of his long crusade for a much timelier release of crime data by the federal government.) Rick was working on the page proofs for his *Crime Dynamics*—the distillation of a lifetime of work on crime trends—while in the hospital. There is no better measure of his stamina and his commitment to scholarship than the remarkable hour-long interview about his career and the state of the field that he sat for on December 11 of last year.² Synoptic in scope, sage, generous, never less than interesting. And without a hint of the illness he was fighting, a battle he would lose less than a month later.

Rick was a civic-minded scholar, and this went well beyond his opinion essays. His willingness to share his knowledge, coupled with a talent for non-technical explanation, were well-enough known that he became the go-to criminologist for print, television, and media reporters seeking expert commentary on a crime story. (I would occasionally call him, saying I wanted to make sure he was okay because I hadn't seen him quoted in the Times for several days.) He consulted, without compensation, for the police department and even the fire department in his beloved St. Louis, the city of his birth and work, and a place he faithfully championed despite its travails.

It was far too soon for us to lose him. Rick was too vibrant a person, too immersed in living, getting too much satisfaction from work and food and music and drinking and talking and from the success of his brilliant sons and from the recent, promising retirement of his brilliant Janet, to go so soon.

Stylish, cool, kind, supportive, funny, driven, clear-thinking, clear-speaking, public-spirited. Richard Rosenfeld. A gift.

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