Evidence-Based Policing
Translating research into practice

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Today’s Webinar on Evidence-Based Policing

1. DEFINITIONS: What is “evidence-based policing” (and what it is not)
2. EVIDENCE: What do we know about police interventions to reduce crime?
3. EXAMPLES: How can police agencies act in evidence-based ways?
4. ACTION: What infrastructure is needed to become more evidence-based?
Evidence-Based Policing

“Police practices should be based on scientific evidence about what works best.”

Lawrence Sherman, 1998

What does this mean?

- Policies and practices are supported by scientifically rigorous evidence and scientific processes.

- Research becomes a part of the conversation about what to do to reduce crime, increase legitimacy, address internal problems.

- Research, knowledge, and information are not ignored when making decisions.
As opposed to decisions based on...

- ...hunches and best guesses
- ...“what we did yesterday”
- ...anecdotes and stories
- ...emotions, feelings, whims, or stereotypes
- ...political pressures and moral panics
- ...empowered community groups
- ...“best practices”
- ...bad science
- ...“fad” knowledge

Justification for Evidence-Based Policing

You gashed your arm, and an infection starts festering which could lead to amputation if not treated.

Research tells you: Your cousin tells you:

![Rx](image1) or ![Bucket with shovel](image2)
Don’t listen to your cousin.

- The medicine’s effects have been scientifically tested, and we know it works.
- Experiments were replicated in different settings and places, on different people.
- We also know that the medicine has a very slim chance of harming you.
- If you choose the mud option, you may suffer for a longer time, even if it helps. It might also leave a nasty scar.
- There is rigorous evidence about “what works” in policing and also research about police practices.
- The evidence in policing has many generalizations which can be used in various jurisdictions.
- Some CJ interventions increase recidivism and victimization (or have no effect at all).
- The “scars” in policing manifest in reduced legitimacy, and perpetuation of bad culture that are hard to get rid of.

Evidence-Based Crime Policy: Benefits

1. Aligned with advanced democratic governance.
2. Reduces crime.
3. May be more cost-effective in times of austerity.
4. Increases transparency and legitimacy.
5. Improves information gathering technologies.
6. Develops and tightens accountability systems.
7. Improves the motivation and work of practitioners.
8. Avoid “cures” that actually harm.
9. Help to moderate moral panics and ideology.
What is the evidence?

Where is it located?
Can I believe it?
Can I draw generalizations from it for my agency?

- Hot spot policing at micro places for disorder
- Variety of POP efforts at hot spots of drugs and disorder
- Arrests for domestic violence
- Nuisance abatement
- Proactive arrests and crackdowns at open air drug markets
- Post arrest case enhancement
- Proactive arrests of repeat offenders
- POP in places (variety) and PSN project
- Zero tolerance and other disorder arrests
- Pulling levers and other gang suppression efforts
- Targeted enforcement (DUIs, gun crimes)
- Community policing using problem solving
- Traffic stops to reduce crime, gun carrying, etc. (DDACTS)
- DARE, GREAT, PAL Centers
- Neighborhood watch, monthly newsletters
- Trying to get landlords to restrict access
- Door to door contacts, home visits after abuse
- Second responder for family abuse
- Undirected saturation patrol or random patrol
- Police-probation partnership to increase supervision for juveniles
- Typological investigations
- Street closures
- Community oriented policing: neighborhood watch, door to door visits
- Probation-Police partnerships to reduce juvenile crime
- Information sharing/fusion centers
- Multi-agency partnerships
- ...
A Summary of the Matrix

- Visualization and organization tool of all moderately rigorous to rigorous research
- Free video training on accessing & using the Matrix can be found at: www.policingmatrix.org
N=103 (Dec 2010)

- Significant Backfire
- Non-Significant Finding
- Mixed Results
- Significant /Effective
Is the evidence “believable”?

Most rigorous studies in the Matrix
79% of successful interventions studied occur at “micro-places” or “neighborhoods”.

64% of successful interventions are “focused”, or tailored strategies.

80% of successful interventions are either “proactive” or “highly proactive”.

53% of interventions that show “no effect” or a “backfire effect” focus on targeting individual(s).
3 Translating research to practice

What does evidence-based policing “look like”?

The Matrix Demonstration Project – institutionalizing research into the daily activities of policing

Using the Matrix – Tactical Assessment in Compstat

- Operation A
- Operation B
- Operation C

- ▼ Significant Backfire
- ○ Non-Significant Finding
- ● Mixed Results
- ★ Significant /Effective
Derbyshire, UK Patrol Functions

HIGHER RISK AGENDAS? – Focused on reacting to individual offenders

MEDIUM RISK AGENDAS: “Promising effects” but need stronger research (neighborhood-level, and gangs)

LOW RISK AGENDAS: Areas we know show positive effects again and again

Using the Matrix: Strategic Development
Other ideas from the MDP

2. Change field training checklists.
3. Creating call codes for proactive activity.
4. Revamping academy and in-service training to better reflect knowledge about effective policing tactics.
5. Restructure requirements for promotions and assessment.
6. Place-based investigations (“casebooks of places”).

The Matrix Demonstration Project:
THREE Principles

1. Intent to institutionalize – these are not ad hoc, one-time projects.
2. Projects are “anchored” in research (any type)
3. GMU-Agency team will create a free demo for other agencies to access to replicate the idea.
How can I improve my agency’s ability to be more receptive to research on policing and crime?

### Building the capacity for EBP

#### Characteristics of an evidence-based agency

- **Basic achievement:**
  - Balances traditional deployment with some deployment that reflects evidence.
  - Tries to evaluate some tactics using reliable methods to see if they are effective.
  - Includes research and analytic knowledge in academy and in-service training.
  - Command and supervisory ranks do not reject it.

- **Mid-level achievement (in addition to basic requirements):**
  - Has an active crime analysis culture that constantly generates information for proactive enforcement and assessment of activities, not only solving individual cases.
  - Includes existing knowledge, research, and analysis into development of SOPs and policies.
  - Incorporates knowledge of research into promotions and rewards systems.
  - Officers and detectives do not reject it; commanders understand why research is important.
  - Compstat evolves into a more dynamic learning environment and engages with knowledge.

- **Advanced achievement (in addition to basic and mid-level requirements):**
  - Works with researchers to generate more knowledge for the field.
  - Analysts conduct their own evaluations of tactics using rigorous methods.
  - Educates citizens and politicians on the research evidence and expectations.
  - All ranks show real evidence of reflection of information (in various forms).
**Undoing Culture**  
(aka “changing cognitions”)

1. Shift patrol cognition from purely reactive, to a balance of reactive and proactive by flipping expectations from call reaction to crime prevention.

2. Shift detective cognition from purely individual, reactive base to problem-oriented and place-based.

3. Activate first line supervisors into “translators” of research and analytic knowledge to street activity rather than reactive deliverers of SOPs.

4. Build a more analytic second-line supervisory rank (usually Lts/Cpts) and expect more sophisticated knowledge and critical thinking from them.

5. Have a portion of your academy and in-service actually teach about the evidence-base.

6. Related to #5: Shift cognition of employees to value other forms of knowledge besides procedural and legal forms, specifically scientific and analytic forms.

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**Building infrastructure**

1. Strengthen and increase crime analysis capacity.

2. Adjust promotional systems to incorporate knowledge req’ts.

3. Build outcome measures into accountability systems.

4. Transition specialized units and detective bureaus into those more balanced on what we know, not what we have always done.

5. Normalize relations with researchers.

6. Filter adoption of innovations through crime prevention evidence, not just through the lens of efficiency, politics, or special interests.
Strengthen Leadership

1. Facilitate discourse and knowledge acquisition about the research, tailored to various levels of the organization. Use opportune moments for education.

2. Develop and identify translation tools for incorporating research into practice (persons, things, organizations, etc.).

3. Use research translation tools to strategically identify areas where research knowledge can help or where more or stronger knowledge is needed.

4. Structure leadership to include research evidence in accountability structures, decision making, strategic plans.

5. Address conflicting leadership styles head on.

6. Create a strategic plan for incorporating research into practice.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!

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