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Smart Policing: Integrating Evidence-Based Practices into Police Departments
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Session Goal

❖ Introduce standards regarding what counts as 'evidence' in applied police research and analysis

❖ Discuss the current status of evidence based practices (EBP) in SPI

❖ Discuss barriers that SPI agencies encounter regarding developing an evidence base, and

❖ Discuss strategies for overcoming them

What counts as 'evidence-based'?

From JRSA (2012), the 'evidence-based movement':

- ❖ Rather than relying on conviction, conjecture, or conventional wisdom, decision makers turn to the **best available evidence** about what does and does not work when evaluating options and making decisions

- ❖ Evidence-based decision making is simply the **routine and systematic** application of the **best available knowledge** in order to identify and choose the optimal approach in policy, management, and other applied settings

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Recent sources regarding EBP

From Lum, et al. (2011)

1. 1997 University of Maryland report to Congress, conducted by Sherman and colleagues on "What Works, What Doesn't, and What's Promising?" in crime prevention

2. Campbell Collaboration sponsors systematic reviews of research across multiple areas of criminal; Focus on high-quality experimental and quasi-experimental studies

Recent sources regarding EBP

3.   Report by the National Research Council (NRC) on Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing (NRC 2004). NRC Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practices brought together a number of senior police scholars[3] to assess the state of police research

Evidence-Based Policing Matrix

4 dimensions:

- Specificity of intervention mechanism
- Type or scope of target (e.g., individual ➔ neighborhood)
- Level of proactivity
- Significance of findings
- (sorted by methodological rigor)

http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/Matrix.html

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Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods

❖ Developed as part of the 1997 report to Congress "Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising?"

❖ Rates a study's overall internal validity on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 representing the weakest design and 5 the

Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods

❖ Level 1: Correlation between a crime prevention program and a measure of crime or crime risk factors at a single point in time

❖ Level 2: Temporal sequence between the program and the crime or risk outcome clearly observed, or the presence of a comparison group without demonstrated comparability to the treatment group

❖ Level 3: Comparison between two or more comparable units of analysis, one with and one without the program.

❖ Level 4: Comparison between multiple units with and without the program, control for other factors, or using comparison units that evidence only minor differences (matching).

❖ Level 5: Random assignment and analysis of comparable units to program and comparison groups."

SPI Scientific Methods

- ❖ Several random assignment methodologies (Philadelphia, Kansas City)

- ❖ Several high-level comparative (matched) methodologies (Boston, LA, Lowell)

- ❖ Several other comparative methodologies (Glendale, LA, Lansing, Palm Beach, Cambridge, others)

- ❖ As several (e.g., Eck, Tilley, Laycock) have pointed out, barriers exist to systematic implementation of moderate to high-level scientific methodologies

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Opportunities to Advance Evidence-Based Practices in Policing

Researcher-agency relationship

What type of relationship do you need?

- ❖ Cooperation-short term/informal
- ❖ Coordination-formal/project based
- ❖ Collaboration-formalized/long term reciprocal

Researcher experience

Wrong fit

❖ Traditionally work within the confines of the university

❖ Rarely work with agencies

❖ Primarily focused on theory and statistics

❖ Primary audience is other academicians

Right fit

❖ Work outside the confines of the university

❖ Typically works with agencies

❖ Primarily focused on use-inspired research

❖ Speak to a broader audience-policymakers, practitioners, academicians, students, and the public.

❖ Concentrate on solutions to crime

Set expectations early

❖ Develop common goals

❖ Determine what is off limits

❖ Define roles and responsibilities

❖ Commit to key personnel remaining in place

❖ Access to people and data

Police impediments

Culture

- Conservative
- Ego
- Don't think it is useful
- Legal concerns
- Insufficient time (call to call)
- Don't trust motives of researcher

Organization

- Police leader resistance
- Insufficient professional development
- Policies that do not accommodate evidence-based practices
- Insufficient funding
  - 56%, Rojek et al.
- Lack infrastructure

Building the Foundation

❖ Develop EBP champions in agency

❖ Strengthen ties with local university

❖ Policies that accommodate evidence-based practices

❖ Capitalize on natural experiments

Design of the intervention

The real world

Best evidence

Policymakers/Leadership

Communtiy
Values, characteristics, problems

Officers
Problems, experiences, values

Community understanding of issues

Officer understanding of issues

Proper diagnoses of the problem

- ❖ Don't "react"
- ❖ Understand the root of the problem
- ❖ Understand multiple dimensions of the problem
- ❖ Understand the natural course of the problem
- ❖ Understand the likely consequences of the problem

Strengthen crime analysis, research & planning

Crime analysis & research- Diagnosing the problem

Planning- Diagnosing capacity to respond to problem

- ❖ Data infrastructure
- ❖ Analytical infrastructure
    - ❖ Crime (CAD/RMS)
    - ❖ Place (GIS)
    - ❖ People (intelligence)
    - ❖ Groups (Social network analysis)

- ❖ Identifying EPB
- ❖ Diagnosing capacity to implement EBP

Unexpected developments

- Changes in leadership
- Changes in the field
    - Officers assigned
    - Police-community relations
- Unintended consequences of program
- Unexpected costs
- Technical difficulties

Consult with experts

- ❖ Evidence based inventories
- ❖ SMART Policing peers
- ❖ CNA
- ❖ POP Center
- ❖ VERA Institute
- ❖ Bureau of Justice Assistance
- ❖ Your local university

Stop and Think

❖ Do these suggestions make sense?

❖ Are there others we should consider?

❖ What are you doing right now to advance the research component of your project?

Comments from SPI Sites

❖ Shawnee, KS
  ❖ Rob Moser & Kevin Bryant

❖ Michigan State Police
  ❖ Nancy Becker-Bennett & Merry Morash