Criminology 101:

Key Findings Every Police Practitioner Needs to Know from Criminological Research

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Webinar Outline

- Why Criminology Matters?
- Ten key findings
- The relevance of these ten key findings for police practitioners
- FAQs

The Ten Key Facts in Criminology

10. Gender makes a big difference.

9. Relational distance matters.

8. Demography matters.

7. Risk factors help to identify individuals at risk for involvement in crime.

6. Victimization precedes offending.

5. Maturational reform is powerful.

4. Disorder and crime go together.

3. Groups enhance involvement in crime.

2. A small fraction of offenders account for a large amount of crime.

1. Crime is highly concentrated in space.

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10. Gender makes a big difference

- Males outnumber females in crime by about ten to one.

- Males are even more over-represented in violent crime.

- There are some crimes, shoplifting in particular, where women participate in crime at a higher rate.

- Domestic Violence is a crime for which women are at elevated risk for being victims.

FIGURE 16
Homicide offending rates, by sex, 1980–2008
Rate per 100,000

Male

Female

Source: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/htus8008.pdf

5
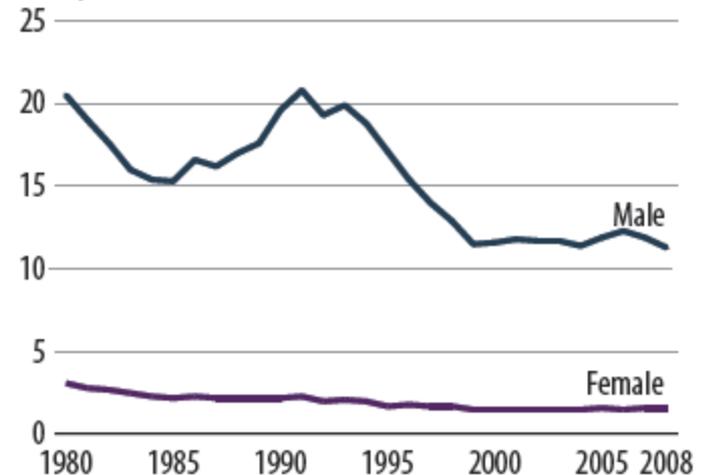
What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- Prevention programs for young men are especially important.

- Intervention programs that identify young men at the early stages of trouble – those who have an arrest, have been adjudicated, spent time in detention, have a delinquent sibling – can pay dividends in reducing criminal involvement.

- Building strong relationships in communities can provide law enforcement with community cooperation and support.

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9. Relational Distance Matters

- For many crimes, "familiarity breeds attempt"

- Most victims of violent crime know the offenders.

- A large fraction of property crime victims are acquainted with the offenders who burgle from them or steal their cars.

- Violent crime between intimates reflects the intensity of relationships often entailing "expressive violence"

FIGURE 8

Violent victimizations perpetrated by strangers and nonstrangers, 2001–2010

Percent
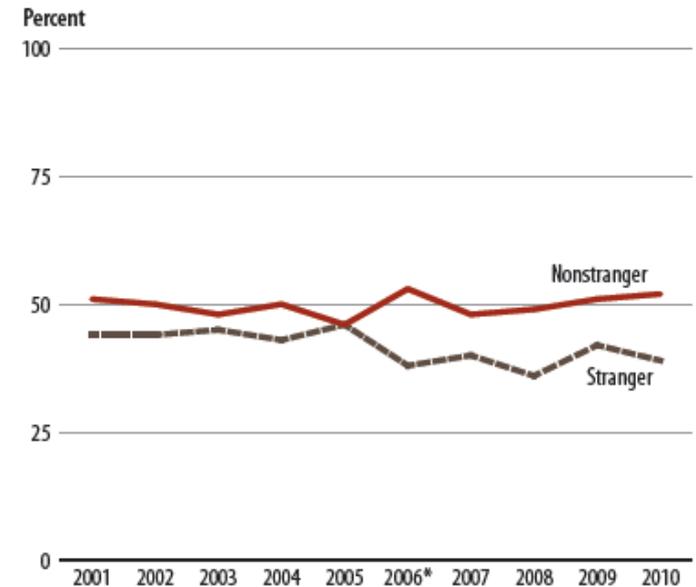
Note: See appendix table 11 for standard errors.

*Due to methodological changes, use caution when comparing 2006 NCVS criminal victimization estimates to other years. See *Criminal Victimization, 2007*, http://www.bjs.gov, for more information.

Source: National Crime Victimization Survey, 2001–2010.

Source: http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv10.pdf

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- In the case of violence against women, likely suspects include spouses, family members and former lovers.

- Overlooking family violence is only likely to lead to additional violence.

- Stranger on stranger violence is increasingly rare; most violent events have a link between victims and offenders.

- Property crime often involves individuals who know each other.

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8. Demography Matters

- Crime varies by region.
- We generally find higher crime rates in urban areas, particularly violent crime.
- Crime has increased in suburban and rural areas in the past several decades.
- In large metropolitan areas, central cities have an influence on crime rates of adjacent municipalities.

Regional Crime Rates Figure

Regional Crime Rates 2012
Violent and Property Crimes per 100,000 Inhabitants

Northeast property crime		2,080.5
violent crime		349.0
Midwest property crime		2,764.8
violent crime		354.6
South property crime		3,226.8
violent crime		423.7
West property crime		2,949.8
violent crime		386.5
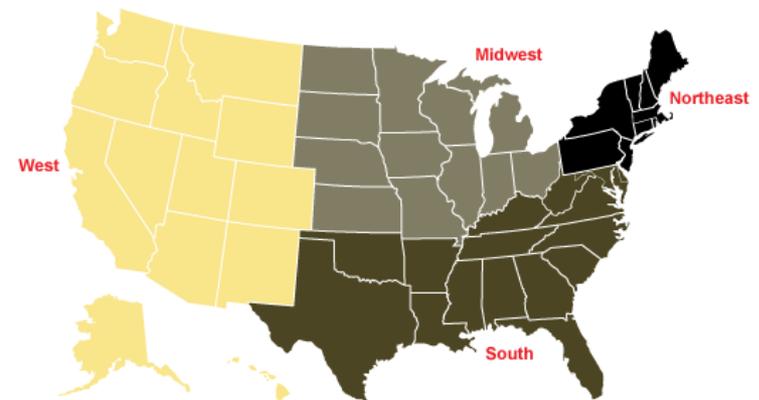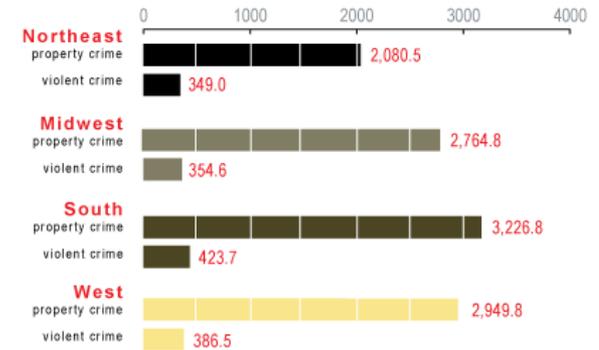
Source: 2012 Federal Bureau of Investigations Uniform Crime Report (http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2012/crime-in-the-u.s.-2012)

11

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- Because crime takes a different form by region, it is important to craft different responses by region, especially for rural areas.

- Suburbs have seen increasing crime, and need to look to best practices from urban areas.

- The demography and physical structure of an area has important implications for patrol, interventions and smart policing.

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7. Risk factors help identify individuals at risk for involvement in crime

- Key risk factors for involvement in crime among juveniles include:
  - Delinquent friends
  - Delinquent belief systems
  - Traumatic life events
  - Lack of parental supervision
  - Early childhood aggression
  - Commitment to street oriented peers.

  The more risk factors an individual has and the earlier they start, the higher the risk for involvement in crime.

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- Effective identification of risk factors is important for communities.

- Working with partners who can identify risk factors is important. Such partners include schools, social service agencies and city recreation groups.

- Police should avoid making risk factors worse. For example, arresting a parent in front of children can have negative consequences.

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- This is particularly true among juveniles.
- Victimization often creates a "motive" to become an offender.
- The cycle of retaliation reflects the relationship between victimization and offending.
- Property victimizations can lead to violent retaliation.
- The probability of being victimized a second time is higher than the initial probability of being a victim of crime.

Percentage of Juveniles Who Offended or Were Victimized in Year 2, by Status in Year 1
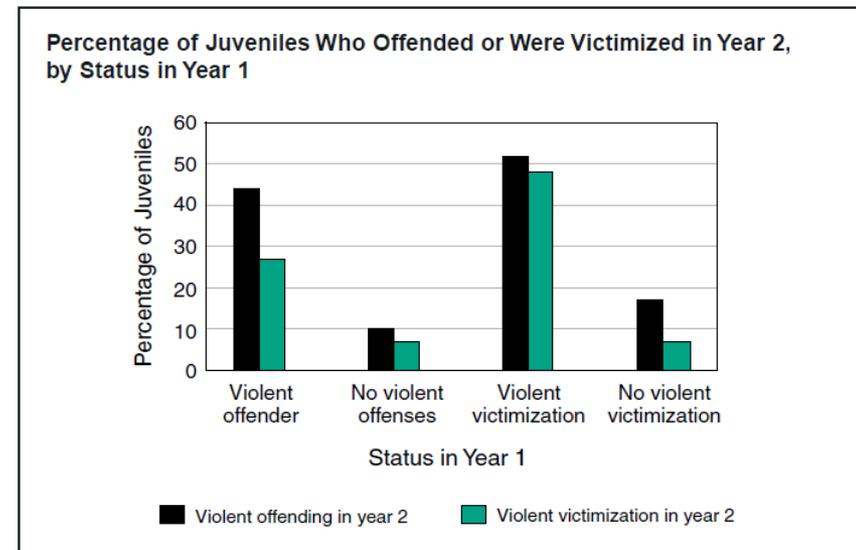
Source: OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin (https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/195737.pdf)

17

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- Victimization prevention should be part of the focus of law enforcement and other partners.
  - Emphasis on preventing future victimizations should be put in place after initial victimizations of persons and places.
- The police should work in conjunction with partners who can reduce victimization risks for young people.
- Identifying key times and place of risk for victimization is an important task.
  - For example, the time between the end of school and when parents arrive home from work is a period of great risk for victimization for juveniles.

18

Stop & Think
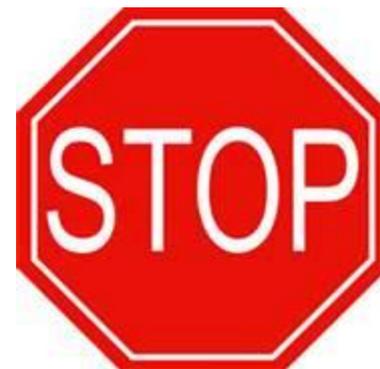
- How can your department use these facts?

Identify a crime problem your city would like to address that could benefit from using one of these approaches.

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- There are two key times of maturational reform in the life course.
  - The first occurs in late teens during the transition to adulthood. This accounts for the dramatic decline in crime among older teens compared to their early teens.
  - The second occurs in the late 20's or early 30's. This accounts for the dramatic reduction in risk of involvement in crime for individuals in their 30's, observed strongly among offenders leaving prison.

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- The police can play an important role in enhancing the natural processes of maturational reform. They can do this through refraining from targeting youth who have begun to be engaged in such reforms.

- The police can work closely with agencies that assist the transition through this reform. Homeboys Industries in Los Angeles is a good example, where Chief Beck works with the agency.

- Crossover Roles are important.

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4. Disorder and crime go together

- Neighborhoods that are disorganized tend to have higher levels of crime.
  - Characteristics of disorder include incivilities such as broken glass, stray dogs, trash, youth hanging out with no apparent purpose and general signs of a lack of care (broken windows).
  - Other characteristics of disorder include demographic variables such as high rates of unemployment, single parents living in poverty, and high rates of unemployment.
  - The more concentrated these are the more likely to have higher rates of crime.

24

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- The police can work to identify incivilities and report them to groups that can reduce those incivilities.

- The police can intensify patrol in places with high levels of incivility.

- The police can assign more officers and different kinds of units to places with high levels of incivility.

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- For juveniles, over 90% of delinquency is committed in groups. "Lone" offenders tend to engage in different kinds of crime than groups.

- Groups are especially involved in violent crime.

- Gangs (and terrorist groups) are perhaps the best example of the role of groups in violent crime.
  - An insult or crime against one gang member is generalized to all other members, spreading the motive for retaliation.

- Groups enable individuals to engage in behavior they would not otherwise consider.

MAP 1. ESTIMATED GANG PRESENCE PER CAPITA BY STATE

Number of Gang Members per 1,000 People

- 6+
- 4-6
- 2-4
- 0-2
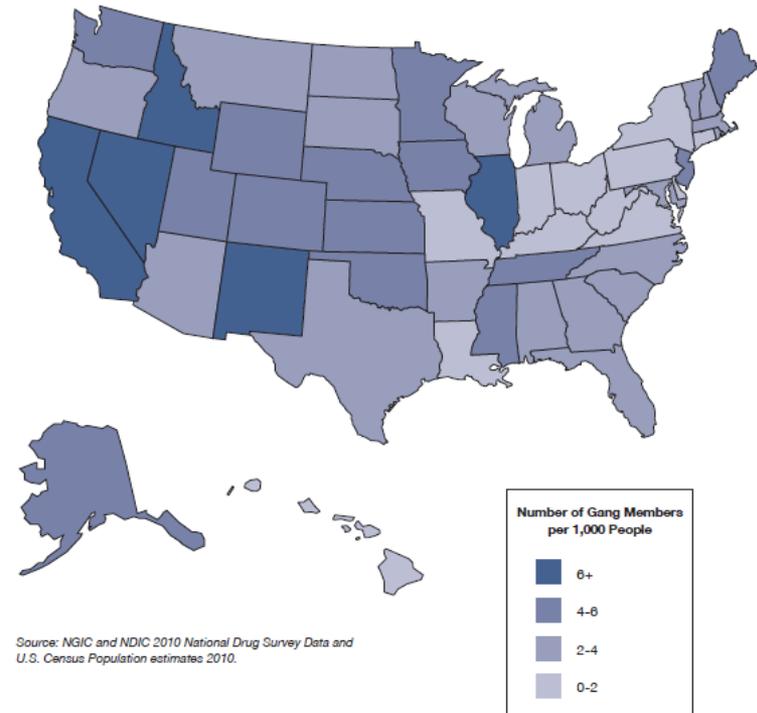
Source: NGIC and NDIC 2010 National Drug Survey Data and U.S. Census Population estimates 2010.

Source: http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment/2011-national-gang-threat-assessment-emerging-trends

27

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- Targeting groups can be a tricky proposition.
  - Too much police attention can increase group solidarity and give groups recognition they might otherwise not have.

- Having special units that target group crime can pay dividends.
  - Gang squads have been important in gathering information for investigations and prevention purposes.

- Tracking membership in groups accurately, including the onset and termination of membership is an important police task and an element of smart policing.

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2. **A small fraction of offenders account for a large amount of crime.**

1. Crime is highly concentrated in space.

2. A small fraction of individuals account for a large volume of crime

- Study after study shows that in any community, a small number of offenders account for a large proportion of crime in that community.
  - 6% of youth in Philadelphia accounted for nearly half of all delinquency.
- These individuals are often on criminal justice supervision of some sort.
- The same is true of places; a small number of places account for a disproportionately high number of victimizations.

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What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- Careful and accurate identification of high rate offenders should be a top priority for law enforcement.

- Law enforcement should develop an objective, crime based set of criteria for identifying such individuals. (See the SPI Webinar on Offender Targeting).

- Enhanced coordination between the police and prosecution pays dividends in going after high rate offenders.

- CAD data can be used to identify address with high rates of 9-1-1 calls for crime.

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1. **Crime is highly concentrated in space.**

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- There are "hotspots" of crime in most communities.

- Hotspots vary in intensity, size, crime types, duration and intensity.

- Hotspots often co-exist with some of these other facts, particularly disorder, risk factors, groups and demography.

Hotspots in Los Angeles, CA Newton Division

Newton Area - 2011
Gun Related Crimes
Hot Spot - Gun Related Crimes
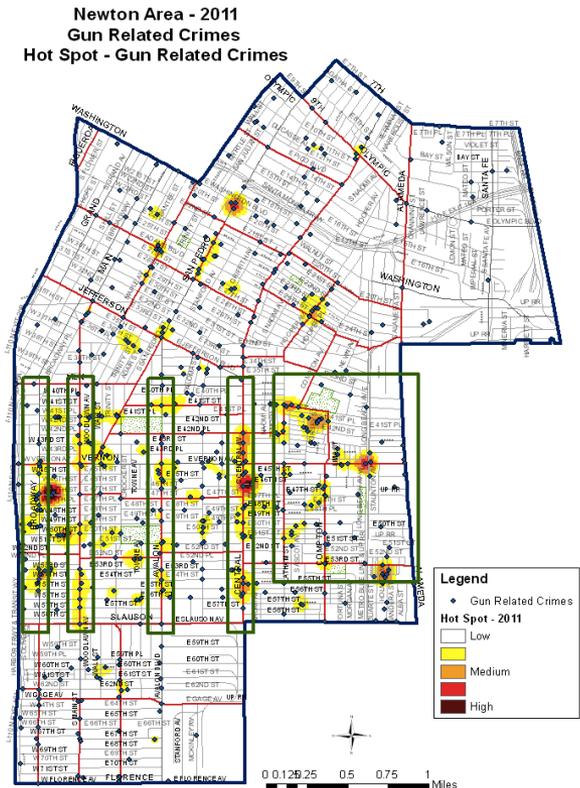
Source: LAPD Presentation at 2013 SPI National Meeting

What Interventions Does This Suggest?

- Correct and careful identification of concentrations of crime is an important task for police. Crime analysis is effective at doing this.

- But policing hot spots is more than "cops on dots" . It involves innovative use of smart policing. Suppression is not always the best approach, or can be used in conjunction with other approaches.

- Cooperation with city agencies and strong police-community relationships can pay dividends in responding to concentrations of crime.

Stop & Think
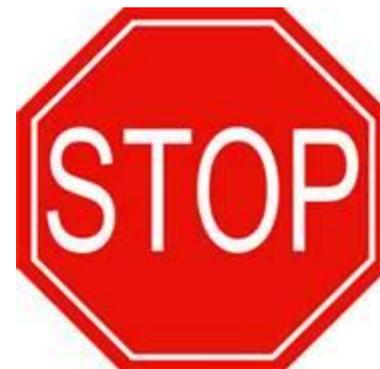
- What SPI sites have integrated these principles?

- What success have SPI sites had with such interventions?

- What new approaches can you think of?

FAQs

- Isn't this a form of profiling?

- How solid is this research?

- Do these national examples hold true in my community?

- What are examples of other communities where these "facts" have been put to work?

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Resources and Contact Information

Additional resources can be found on the SPI website at:

- www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/library-and-multimedia-resources/deterrence

- Project Safe Neighborhoods: www.psn.gov

- How Families and Communities Influence Youth Victimization. Janet Lauritsen. https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/201629.pdf Risk factors, demography, gender, victimization.

Be sure to look to www.crimesolutions.gov as well as the Crime Analysis webinar.

Contact information of speakers:

- Dr. Scott Decker: Scott.Decker@asu.edu