

# WHAT WORKS IN POLICING? LESSONS FROM SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

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# Introduction

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- There are a growing number of systematic reviews of policing strategies
- We conducted a review of policing systematic reviews
  - ▣ What have we learned? What works?
  - ▣ What should the future of policing research and systematic reviews look like?
- Those reviews provide a very different portrait of policing effectiveness than that gained in the 1980s and early 1990s

# Data sources

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- 17 completed reviews related to policing completed by end of 2015
  - ▣ Focus primarily on Campbell Collaboration reviews
    - 14 published/forthcoming Campbell reviews
    - 1 published Cochrane review
    - 2 other systematic reviews
  
- Funding from the former National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) in the UK helped drive a recent increase in reviews

# What are the reviews?

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<b>Review</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Year</b>
Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)	West & O'Neal	2004
Interventions to reduce traffic accidents	Blais & Dupont	2005
Drug law enforcement	Mazerolle et al.	2007
Problem-oriented policing (POP)	Weisburd et al.	2008
Second responders for domestic violence	Davis et al.	2008
Police patrol for drunken driving	Goss et al.	2008
Micro displacement	Bowers et al.	2011
DNA for police investigations	Wilson et al.	2011
Stress management programs	Patterson et al.	2012
Focused deterrence (i.e. pulling levers)	Braga & Weisburd	2012
Hot spots	Braga et al.	2012
Gun carrying	Koper & Mayo-Wilson	2012
Interrogation techniques	Meissner et al.	2012
Interventions to increase legitimacy	Mazerolle et al.	2013
Community policing	Gill et al.	2014
Macro displacement	Weisburd et al.	2014
Policing disorder	Braga et al.	2015

# What are the results of the reviews?

## Positive results

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<b>Review</b>	<b>Results</b>
Hot spots	Moderate impact on reducing crime and disorder; POP strategies work best
Focused deterrence strategies	Moderate to large impact on reducing violence
Problem-oriented policing	Modest but significant reduction in crime
Policing disorder	“Broken windows” policing effective; community problem solving works better than aggressive order maintenance
Gun carrying	Directed patrol generally effective in reducing gun crime
DNA for police investigations	Appears effective in helping clear cases/identify suspects
Drug law enforcement	POP particularly effective, benefits for community-wide interventions
Micro displacement	Displacement not inevitable, diffusion of crime control benefits more likely
Police patrol for drunk driving	Associated with reduced crashes/injuries but poor studies
Programs to reduce accidents	Increased patrols generally reduce accidents/fatalities

# What are the results of the reviews?

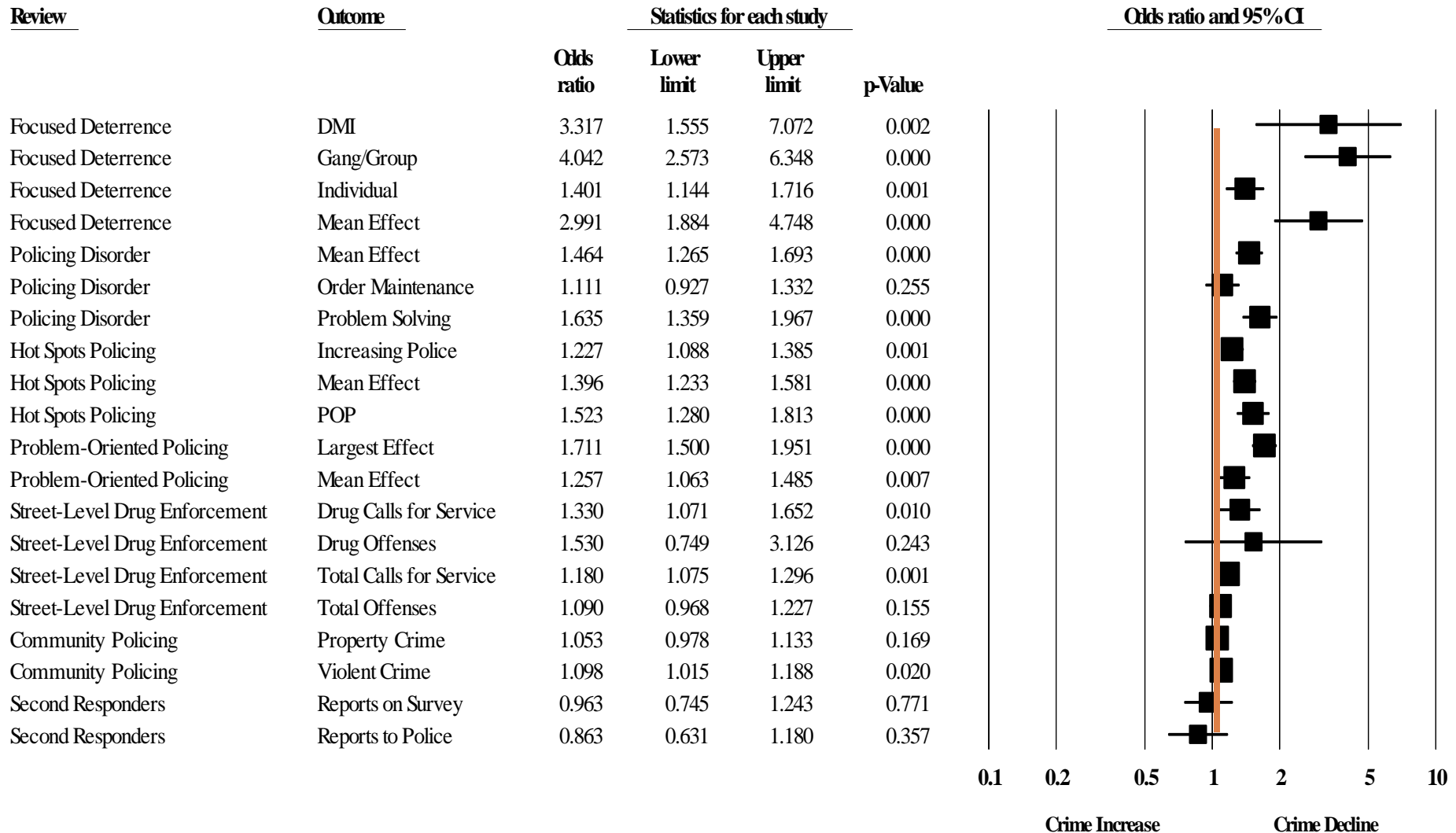
## Promising and less promising results

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<b>Review</b>	<b>Results</b>
Interrogation techniques	Information-gathering techniques better than accusatory in acquiring true confessions
Interventions to increase legitimacy	Efforts to enhance procedural justice generally help build legitimacy
Macro displacement	Displacement not inevitable, diffusion of crime control benefits more likely
Community policing	Small impact on crime, greater positive impact on citizen satisfaction and legitimacy
D.A.R.E.	No significant impact on drug use, alcohol use, or tobacco use
Second responders	No significant impact on reducing domestic violence
Stress management	No effects on psychological, physiological, or behavioral outcomes

# Effect sizes of policing interventions

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# From nothing works...

*“The police do not prevent crime. This is one of the best-kept secrets of modern life. Experts know it, the police know it, but the public does not know it. Yet the police pretend that they are society’s best defense against crime. This is a myth.”*

—Bayley (1994: 3)

*“..no evidence exists that augmentation of police forces or equipment, differential patrol strategies, or differential intensities of surveillance have an effect on crime rates.”*

—Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990: 270)



# ...to what works?

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<b>What works?</b>	<b>What's promising?</b>	<b>What is less effective?</b>
Hot spots policing	Information-gathering interrogation method	Second responder programs
Focused deterrence	Programs to increase procedural justice and enhance legitimacy	Stress management programs
Problem-oriented policing	Community policing, especially to increase legitimacy/satisfaction	D.A.R.E.
Directed patrol for gun violence		
DNA for police investigations		
Problem-solving policing disorder programs		

# Methodological rigor in the reviews

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Review	Eligible Studies	Experiments	%
Stress management	12	9	75%
Interrogation techniques	17	12	70.6%
Hot spots	19	10	52.6%
Second responders	10	5	50%
Problem-oriented policing	10	4	40%
Policing disorder	28	9	32.1%
Drug law enforcement	14	3	21.4%
DNA for police investigations	5	1	20%
Legitimacy	30	4	13.3%
Micro displacement	44	5	11.4%
D.A.R.E.	11	1	9.1%
Community policing	25	1	4%
Police patrol for drunken driving	32	1	3.1%
Traffic accident prevention	33	0	0%
Focused deterrence strategies	10	0	0%
Gun carrying	4	0	0%
Macro displacement	33	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>19.2%</b>

# Limitations in existing studies

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- Need for more rigorous studies in many areas
  - ▣ Removing repeats, there are 285 unique policing studies in these reviews
    - 17.2% of these studies are randomized experiments
  
- Lack of descriptive validity in original studies
  - ▣ Detailed information on the methodology, sample, and results often omitted
  
- Cost-benefit analysis is rare

# Limitations in reviews

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- Heterogeneity in treatments and outcome measures makes it difficult to summarize strategies statistically
- Difficult to disentangle components of multi-faceted interventions
- Effect sizes are often “guesstimates”
  - ▣ Inconsistency in effect size calculation across reviews
- Need for Campbell reviews of “standard model” tactics (Weisburd & Eck, 2004)

# Lessons for police

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- Police should focus efforts on high activity places and people
  - ▣ Displacement is not inevitable at the micro- or meso- level when police focus their efforts
- Police will increase their effectiveness with proactive problem solving (over simply focused approaches)
- Police should go beyond traditional approaches (e.g. using law enforcement and arrest)
- COPS Office Crime Prevention Research Reviews includes practitioner-oriented summaries of 11 Campbell reviews

# Conclusions

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- Systematic reviews have been important in recent years for helping to synthesize what we know about policing effectiveness
  - ▣ There are policing strategies that work to reduce crime and disorder
  
- Moving forward, need to balance research generation and research synthesis
  - ▣ Need for more randomized trials

# Thank you



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Telep, C. W., & Weisburd, D. (2016). Policing. In D. P. Farrington, D. Weisburd, & C. E. Gill (eds.), *What works in crime prevention and rehabilitation: Lessons from systematic reviews* (pp. 137–168). New York: Springer.