

# THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF EVIDENCE-BASED POLICING

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# Introduction

- “Police practices should be based on scientific evidence about what works best”
  - ▣ Sherman (1998: 2) on evidence-based policing
- To date that focus has typically been on what works best to reduce crime
- Crime isn’t the only (or even primary) outcome of interest currently in American policing
- Expanding the scope of evidence-based policing needed to build evidence in new areas (Telep, 2016)
  - ▣ Also need to increase officer receptivity to evidence-based policing

# Outline

- I. Evidence-based policing to date
  - ▣ What have we learned about reducing crime?
- II. What matters today in American policing?
  - ▣ President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing
- III. Expanding the scope of evidence-based policing
  - ▣ Focus on enhancing police legitimacy
- IV. Examining police officer receptivity to evidence-based policing
  - ▣ Ensuring the expanding evidence base is utilized

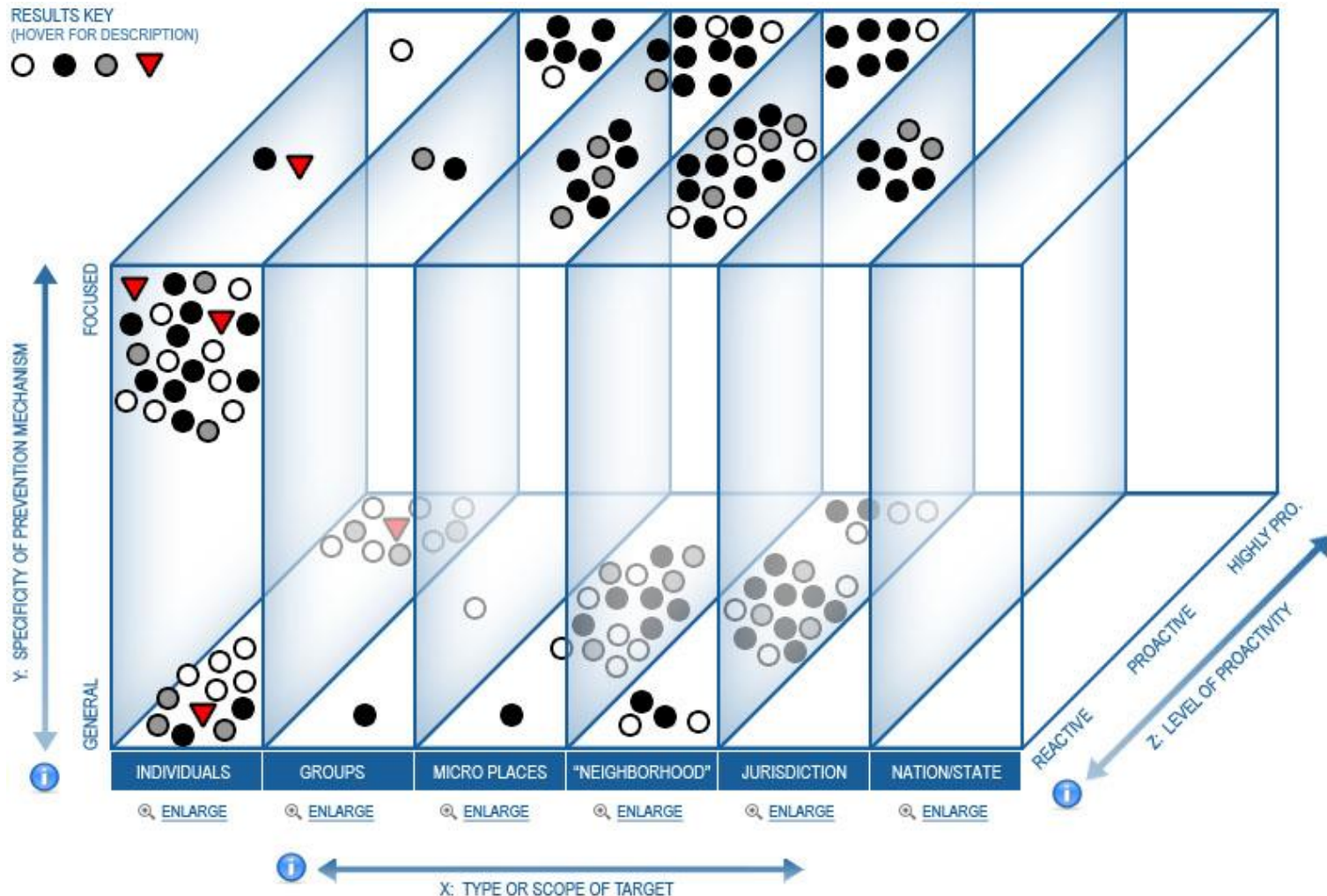
# Evidence-based policing to date

- Primarily focused on reducing crime
  - ▣ Sherman (1998: 2): need for “new paradigm for police improvement and for public safety in general: evidence-based crime prevention”
  - ▣ Welsh (2006: 309): “While it is acknowledged that evidence-based policing can serve other useful purposes...the main outcome of interest or ‘bottom line’ is crime prevention”
- Successful in changing the “nothing works” mindset (e.g. Bayley, 1994; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990)

# What have we learned from evaluation studies?

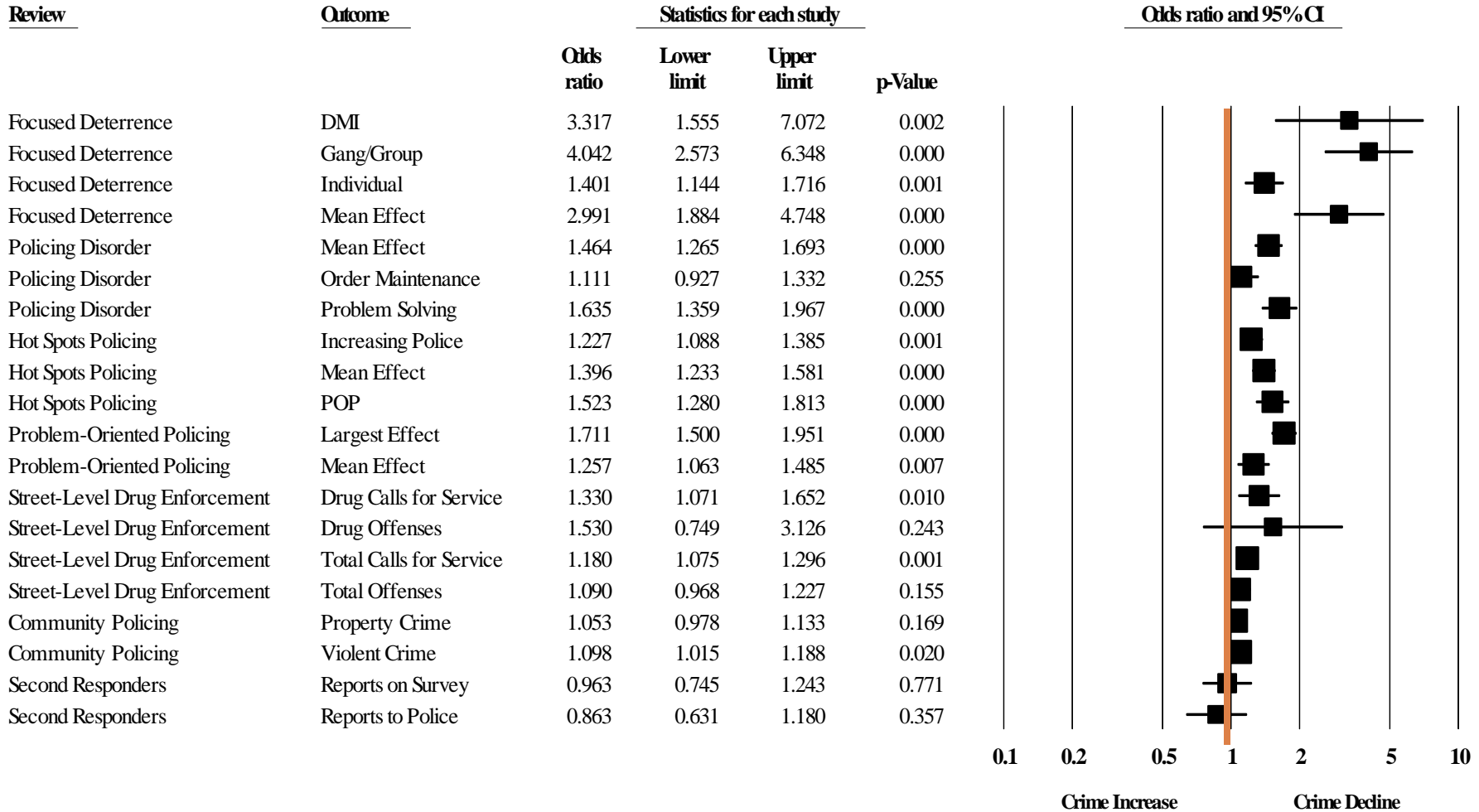
(Lum, Koper, & Telep, 2011; online at [www.policingmatrix.org](http://www.policingmatrix.org))

## Evidence-Based Policing Matrix



# What have we learned from systematic reviews?

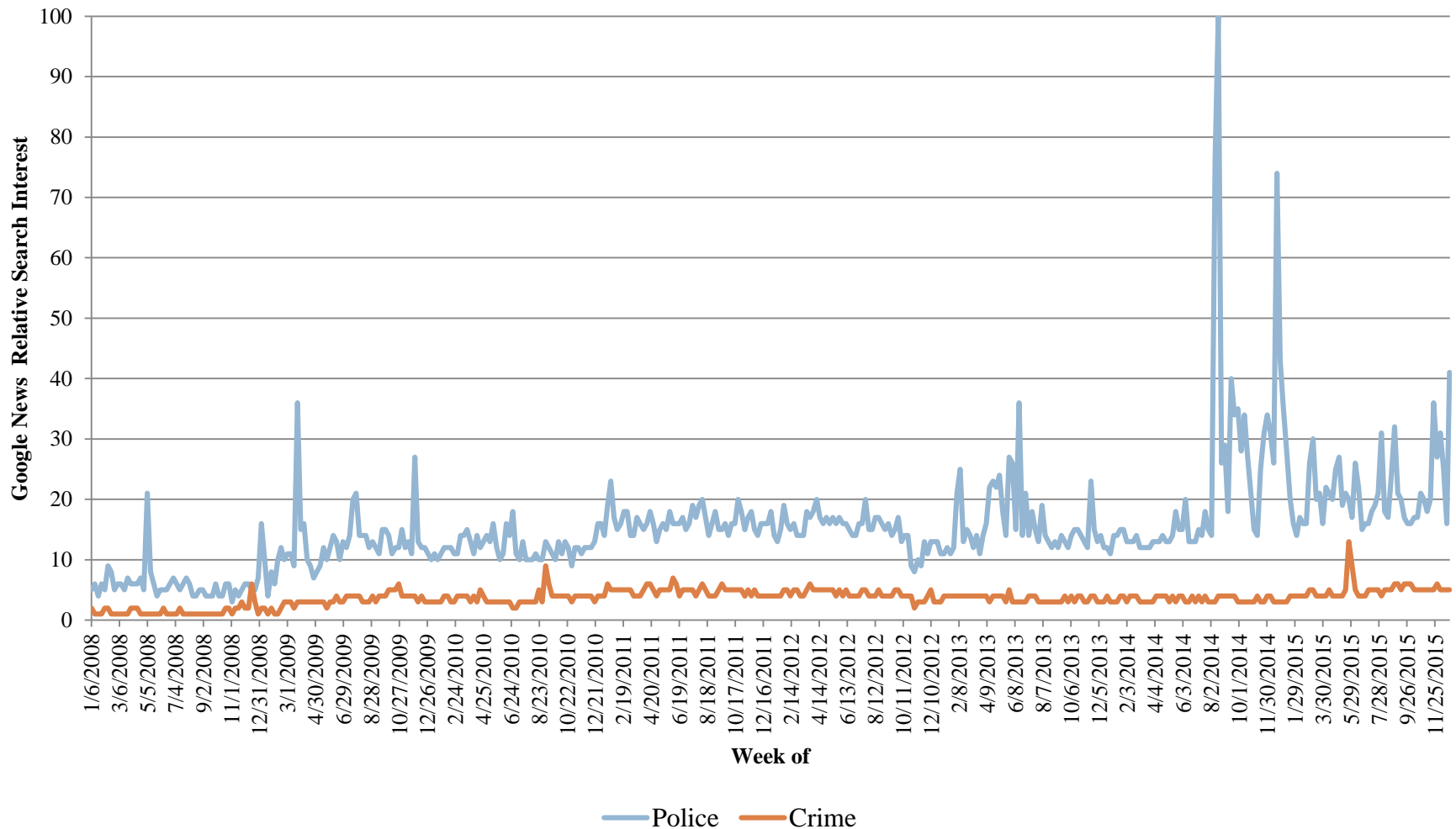
(Telep & Weisburd, 2016)



# What matters in American policing?

- We now have a great deal of evidence on what works in reducing crime, but what else matters?
  - ▣ Legitimacy
  - ▣ Use of force
  - ▣ Transparency/accountability...
  
- *“We will need to examine not just **how we recruit**, but who we recruit. We will need to consider the issues related to the concept of **‘police legitimacy’** and identify the best approaches to put this concept into practice. We need to fully embrace evidence-based policing and best practices. I also believe we must focus on the role of **technology** in policing...Finally, I believe that we must take the lead in addressing the number of **sexual assault kits** that are languishing in police evidence holding facilities and labs.”*
  - ▣ Terrance Cunningham, President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police on his priorities for 2016

# U.S. Google News searches: “police” vs. “crime” 2008-2015





# President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing

## Building Trust & Legitimacy

Promoting trust and ensuring legitimacy through procedural justice, transparency, accountability and honest recognition of past and present obstacles

## Policy & Oversight

Developing comprehensive and responsive policies on key topics while also implementing formal checks/balances and data collection/analysis

## Technology & Social Media

Balancing embrace of technology and digital communications with local needs, privacy, assessments and monitoring

## Community Policing & Crime Reduction

Encouraging the implementation of policies that support community-based partnerships in the reduction of crime

## Training & Education

Emphasizing the importance of high quality and effective training and education through partnerships with local and national training facilities

## Officer Wellness & Safety

Endorsing practices that support officer wellness and safety through the re-evaluation of officer shift hours and data collection/analysis to help prevent officer injuries

# Moving forward with evidence-based policing

- Need to think more broadly about building the evidence base for a variety of outcomes/questions
  - ▣ **How can we increase citizen perceptions of police legitimacy?**
  - ▣ How can we reduce officer use of force while maintaining officer safety?
  - ▣ How can body cameras and other technologies increase transparency and improve accountability?
- Building evidence can be more challenging here
  - ▣ How do you measure desired outcomes?
  - ▣ How do you design rigorous studies?

# Enhancing police legitimacy

- *“Police and sheriffs’ departments should adopt procedural justice as the guiding principle for internal and external policies and practices to guide their interactions with the citizens they serve”*
  - ▣ President’s Task Force (2015: 11)
  
- What is procedural justice? (Tyler, 2004)
  - ▣ Participation
  - ▣ Neutrality
  - ▣ Dignity and respect
  - ▣ Trustworthy motives
  
- Research (largely survey-based) suggests links between procedural justice, legitimacy perceptions, and compliance with the law (Tyler et al., 2015)

# Can we enhance legitimacy in practice?

(Nagin & Telep, in progress)

## □ Training for officers

- “We know virtually nothing about the short- or long-term effects associated with police training of any type.” (Skogan et al., 2015: 320)
- Training evaluations to date seem to affect attitudes, but little impact on citizen perceptions (Wheller et al., 2013) and no careful examination of officer behavior

## □ Scripts for officers

- Conflicting results for a procedural justice script in Australia (Mazerolle et al., 2013) vs. Scotland (MacQueen & Bradford, 2015)

# Evidence-based legitimacy policing?

- Evidence that procedural justice linked to legitimacy in citizen surveys, but translating this into policy is complicated and evidence is limited and mixed
  - ▣ Need more research for police to be evidence-based
- One issue: officer actual behavior only weakly linked to citizen perceptions about officer behavior in a New York study (Worden & McLean, 2014)
  - ▣ Procedural injustice had greater negative impact than procedural justice had positive impact

# Need to move quickly!

- For these other outcomes of interest, policing practice moving faster than research
  - ▣ e.g. Effort to expand “effective” principled policing training in California statewide
  
- Exciting developments:
  - ▣ Bureau of Justice Assistance Smart Policing Initiative body camera projects
  - ▣ National Institute of Justice funding of research based on President’s Task Force recommendations
  - ▣ Arnold Foundation commitment to criminal justice research

# Building receptivity to research

(Telep & Winegar, in press; Telep & Lum, 2014)

- Once we do have an evidence base, need to make police aware of and open to using it
- With the crime control evidence base, surveys suggest officers know what works, but also often think ineffective strategies reduce crime

Strategy	Very Effective %		Effective %		Somewhat Effective %		Not Effective %	
	Officers	Chiefs	Officers	Chiefs	Officers	Chiefs	Officers	Chiefs
Hot spots policing	13.7	28.9	30.0	55.6	28.7	15.6	14.9	0
Random preventive patrol	9.5	6.7	28.5	15.6	38.6	51.1	8.7	24.4

Officers n = 1,107 ; Chiefs n = 45

# Are police familiar with “evidence-based policing?”

(Telep & Somers, in progress)

- Have you ever heard of the term “evidence-based policing”?

Sample	Yes %	No %
Officers (4 agencies, n = 1094)	27.8	71.4
Supervisors/managers (Oregon, n = 163)	65.0	35.0
Chiefs/executives (Oregon, n=104)	87.8	12.1



# Key words in police officer definitions

Key Word	Percentage Of Definitions That Included...		
	Officers	Supervisors	Chiefs
Statistics/data	27.2	38.7	52.8
Effective/what works	18.4	34.9	29.2
Research/empirical	19.6	31.1	25.0
Evaluation/analysis	12.4	9.4	15.3
Specific places/people	21.2	17.0	15.3
Science/scientific	5.2	8.5	13.9
Prevention/proactive	7.2	5.7	6.9
<b>Forensics/case evidence</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>

# How “correct” are police definitions?

Sample	No match %	Partial match %	Total match %
Officers (n = 250)	37.2	59.6	3.2
Supervisors/managers (n = 106)	21.7	73.6	4.7
Chiefs/executives (n=72)	18.1	73.6	8.3

# Moving forward with receptivity

- Making research accessible and digestible
  - ▣ Officer education
  - ▣ Practitioner-friendly reports
  - ▣ Translation tools
  
- Making evidence-based policing a reality
  - ▣ Definitions matter- building a common language between police and researchers
  - ▣ Balancing research evidence and officer experience  
(Willis & Mastrofski, 2014, 2016)
  - ▣ Providing evidence on questions that matter to police

# Conclusions

- Efforts to make policing more evidence-based have produced important lessons on how police can effectively reduce crime
- Need to think more broadly about building the evidence base on other current outcomes of interest
- Evidence-based policing requires not only generating and synthesizing the evidence, but getting police to utilize it

# Thank you

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Telep, C. W. (2016). Expanding the scope of evidence-based policing. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 15(1), 243–252.

