

# WHAT DOES EVIDENCE-BASED POLICING MEAN TO POLICE OFFICERS?

Cody W. Telep

Logan J. Somers

Arizona State University

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# Introduction

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- Push for evidence-based policing in recent years from academics, police leaders, and policymakers
- Little is known about the extent to which practitioners recognize and understand the term “evidence-based policing”
- Do officer definitions align with researcher definitions?

# Researcher definitions of evidence-based policing

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Author (Year)	Definition
Sherman (1998)	“police practices should be based on <b>scientific evidence</b> about <b>what works</b> best...the use of the best available <b>research</b> on the outcomes of police work to implement guidelines and <b>evaluate</b> agencies, units, and officers”
Welsh (2006)	“the police using the highest quality available research evidence on <b>what works</b> best to reduce a <b>specific</b> crime problem and tailoring the intervention to the local context and conditions”
Lum, Koper, & Telep (2011)	Evidence-Based Policing Matrix: “ <b>proactive, focused, place-based</b> interventions are more likely to reduce crime and disorder than strategies concentrating on individuals, or those that are reactive and/or general in nature”
Lum & Koper (2013)	“law-enforcement perspective and philosophy that implicates the use of <b>research, evaluation, analysis,</b> and <b>scientific</b> processes in law-enforcement decision making”

# Research questions

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1. How familiar are police practitioners of varying ranks with the term “evidence-based policing”?
2. To what extent do police practitioners familiar with the term “evidence-based policing” define it in ways similar to researchers?
3. How do definitions vary based on rank and officer characteristics?

# Lum & Telep receptivity survey

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- Survey designed to assess officer receptivity to research and evidence-based policing (Lum et al., 2012; Telep, in press; Telep & Lum, 2014; Telep & Winegar, 2016)
  - ▣ Online at [cebcp.org/matrix-demo](http://cebcp.org/matrix-demo)
  
- Initial survey question: “have you ever heard of the term ‘evidence-based policing?’”
  - ▣ If yes, asked to provide a definition

# Data

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1. Four municipal agency sample, majority line-level officers
  - ▣ Sacramento, CA
  - ▣ Richmond, VA
  - ▣ Reno, NV
  - ▣ Roanoke County, VA
2. Oregon mid-level supervisors and managers sample
3. Oregon police chiefs, sheriffs, and administrators sample
  - ▣ Both Oregon samples are from agencies statewide

# Definition coding process: Key concepts

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- Statistics/data
- Effective/what works
- Research/empirical
- Evaluation/analysis
- Specific places/people
- Science/scientific
- Prevention/proactive
- Forensics/case evidence

# Definition coding process: Overall score

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- Score for definition relative to academic definitions
  - ▣ 0 = no answer/didn't know
  - ▣ 1 = does not match
  - ▣ 2 = partial match
  - ▣ 3 = total match
  
- Both authors independently coded each definition and reached consensus on areas of disagreement
  - ▣ 7% mismatch in initial coding

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

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

Sample	Heard of EBP	Provided a Definition
Officers (n = 1094)	304 (27.8%)	250 (22.9%)
Supervisors/managers (n = 163)	106 (65.0%)	106 (65.0%)
Chiefs/leaders (n=104)	86 (87.8%)	72 (83.7%)
Total (n=1355)	496 (36.6%)	428 (31.6%)

# Key words in police officer definitions

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Key Word	Percentage Of Definitions That Included...			
	Officers	Supervisors	Chiefs	Total
Statistics/data*	27.2	38.7	52.8	34.3
Effective/what works*	18.4	34.9	29.2	24.3
Research/empirical	19.6	31.1	25.0	23.4
Evaluation/analysis	12.4	9.4	15.3	19.2
Specific places/people	21.2	17.0	15.3	12.1
Science/scientific*	5.2	8.5	13.9	7.5
Prevention/proactive	7.2	5.7	6.9	6.8
<b>Forensics/case evidence*</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>9.3</b>

\*  $\chi^2$  p < .05

# Number of key words in definitions

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Total Key Words	Percentage of Definitions that Included...			
	Officers	Supervisors	Chiefs	Total
0	30.4	13.2	8.3	22.4
1	39.2	42.5	40.3	40.2
2	20.8	31.1	37.5	26.2
3	8.0	12.3	12.5	9.8
4	1.6	0.9	1.4	1.4

$\chi^2 = 27.2$  ( $p < .05$ )

# How “correct” are police definitions?

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Sample	No answer %	No match %	Partial match %	Total match %
Officers	5.2	32.0	59.6	3.2
Supervisors	0.9	20.8	73.6	4.7
Chiefs	2.8	15.3	73.6	8.3
Total	3.7	26.4	65.4	4.4

$\chi^2 = 16.6$  ( $p < .05$ ) Note: no answer and no match were combined for the  $\chi^2$  test

# Effect of officer characteristics: At least one key word in definition

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Variable	b	SE	Odds ratio
Chiefs sample	-.17	.69	.85
Managers sample	.67	.51	1.96
Master's degree	1.55	.60	4.70*

- Also controlled for:
  - Male vs. female
  - White vs. nonwhite
  - Patrol officer vs. higher ranking
  - Attended recent conference
  - Recent training on effectiveness
  - Bachelor's degree vs. less than bachelor's
  - Years of experience
  - Read any documents on police effectiveness
  - Number of publications read

# Effect of officer characteristics: Definition was partial/total match

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Variable	b	SE	Odds ratio
Chiefs sample	-1.13	.60	.33
Managers sample	-.09	.47	.91
Patrol officer	-.83	.41	.44*
Master's degree	1.31	.48	3.71*
Read 2+ publications	.83	.42	2.28*

# Summary of results

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- Less than 1/3 of all respondents provided a definition of “evidence-based policing”
  - Higher ranking officers much more likely to be familiar with the term
- Higher ranking officers more likely to have “correct” definitions with more key words, but key words show up inconsistently across all definitions
- More educated officers more likely to have definitions that align with researcher conceptions

# Implications and future research

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- Definitions matter—the importance of building a common language between police and researchers
- Increasing receptivity through education and partnerships
- Plan to continue to expand the sample and assess how “better” definitions equate with actual practice

# Thank you

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**Cody W. Telep**

School of Criminology and Criminal Justice

Arizona State University

Email: [cody.telep@asu.edu](mailto:cody.telep@asu.edu)

