Assessing the Existing Research on Police Training Curricula

A presentation on the existing evidence supporting the core knowledge and skills police need to promote the rule of law and protect the population

By

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What I cover

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE LAW OF CRIME/PROBLEM CONCENTRATION

    People

    Places

    Targets/Victims

    Crime Concentration Data Matters

CONCEPTUALIZING POLICE RESPONSES TO PROBLEMS

HIGH RISK PEOPLE/GROUPS

    High Risk People/Groups Curriculum Scope

    Evidence on Training Police to Respond to High Risk People/Groups

    Data to Assess Effectiveness in Police Responding to High Risk People/Groups

CRIME-PRONE PLACES

    High Risk Places Curriculum Scope

    Evidence on Training Police in Responding to High Risk Places

    Data to Assess Effectiveness in Police Responding to High Risk Places

PROTECTING VICTIMS

    Protecting Victims Curriculum Scope

    Evidence on Training Police to Protect High Risk Victims

    Data to Assess Effectiveness in Police Protecting Vulnerable People

What I don't cover

- Specific training needs around the laws and regulations that dictate the local powers of law enforcement officers

- Organizational policies, structures, or practices that enable a police service to promote the rule of law and protect the population (Peter Neyroud)

- Training methodology best employed within police academies to promote the rule of law and protect the population in the international context (Tamara Herald)

- Policies and practices for police use of force

- Policing practices that build community trust and legitimacy

- Relationship between police agencies and forensics labs

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE LAW OF CRIME CONCENTRATION

- Sherman (2007) -- "power few" (or power few hypothesis) drawing from

    - economists' "Pareto curve" OR non-linear "hockey stick" skewed distribution J-curve
    - popularized as the "80–20" rule where 80% of the volume of outcomes in a group are generated by 20% of its members

- Weisburd (2014) - law of crime concentration - research shows for five decades that crime across the world is highly concentrated in certain places (micro geographic, hotspots, communities, temporal), with certain high risk offenders (people) and that some people are more likely than others to be victims.
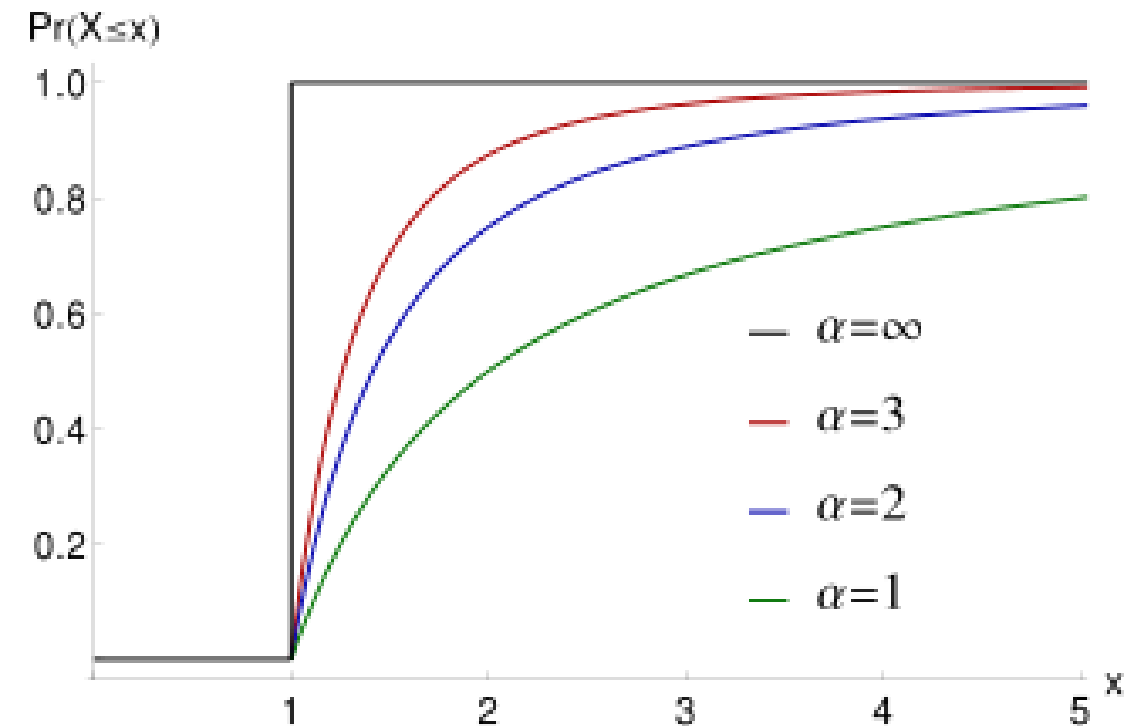
Systematic Reviews of Concentration of Crime at Places, Offenders and Victims

Source: John Eck, personal correspondence
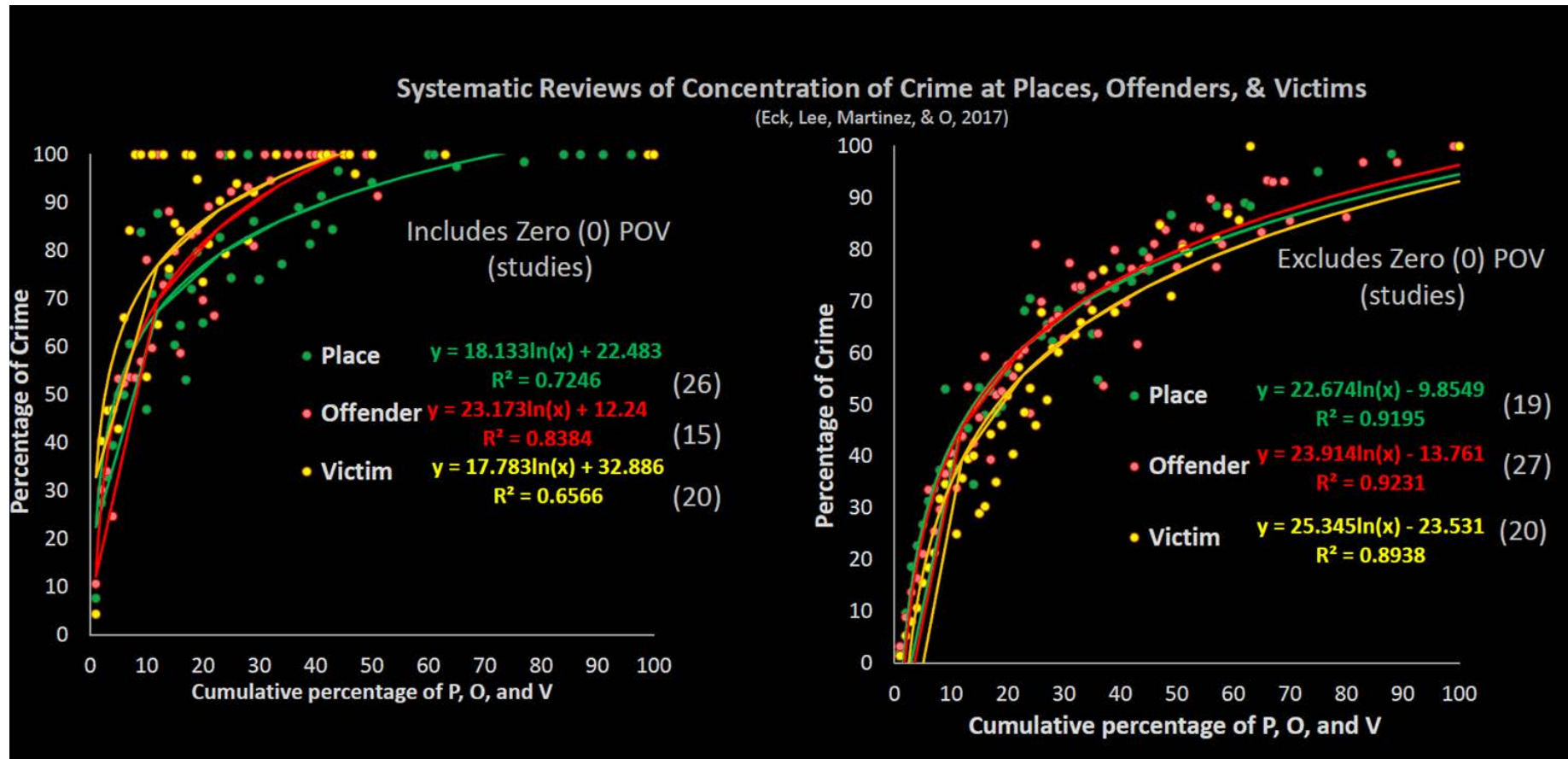
Crime Concentration - People

- Small proportion of people (5 percent) who commit a large proportion of crime

- Flip side is that most individuals are law-abiding citizens who do not come in contact with the criminal justice system

- Farrington's work on the concentration of offending in families should be presented as a probabilistic (highly likely) scenario rather than a deterministic outcome of being in (or from) a complex family environment

- Explication of the Age-Crime Curve - nonlinear relationship between age and crime
  - age-crime curve reflects decreasing parental controls, a peaking of peer influence in the teenage years, and then increasing family and community controls with age

- Moffitt's presentation of the differences between adolescent limited and life course persistent offenders
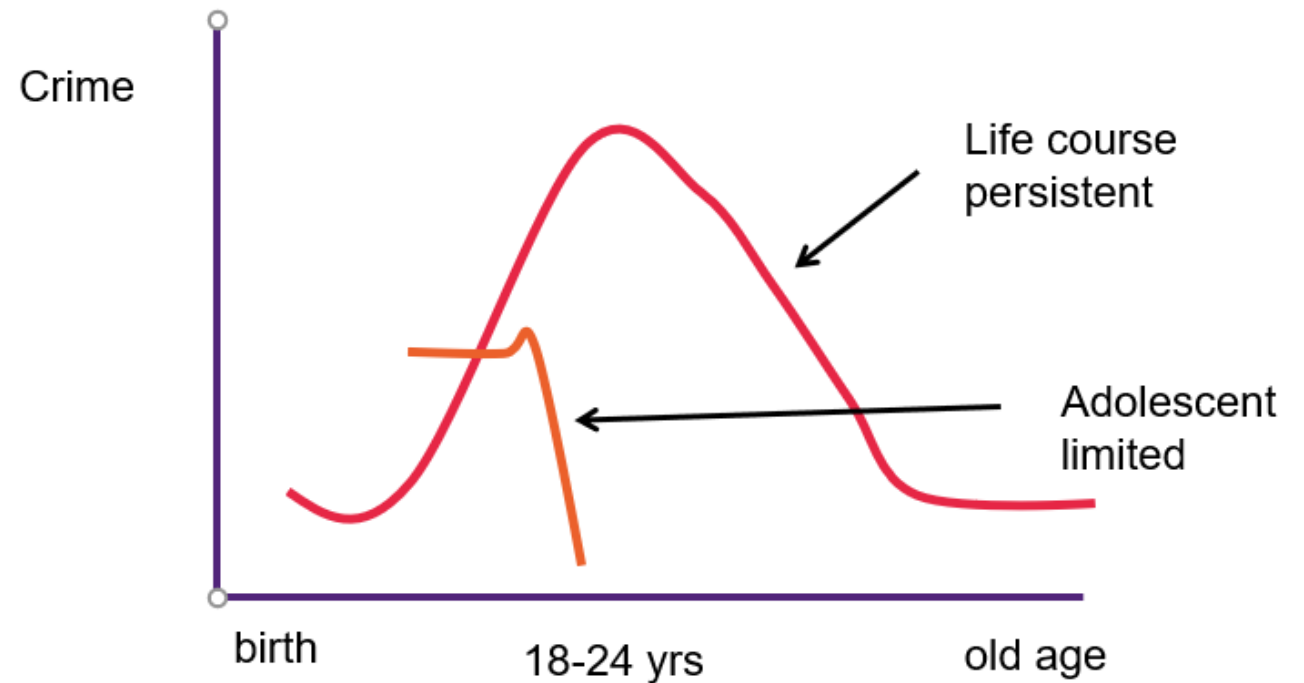
Crime Concentration - Places
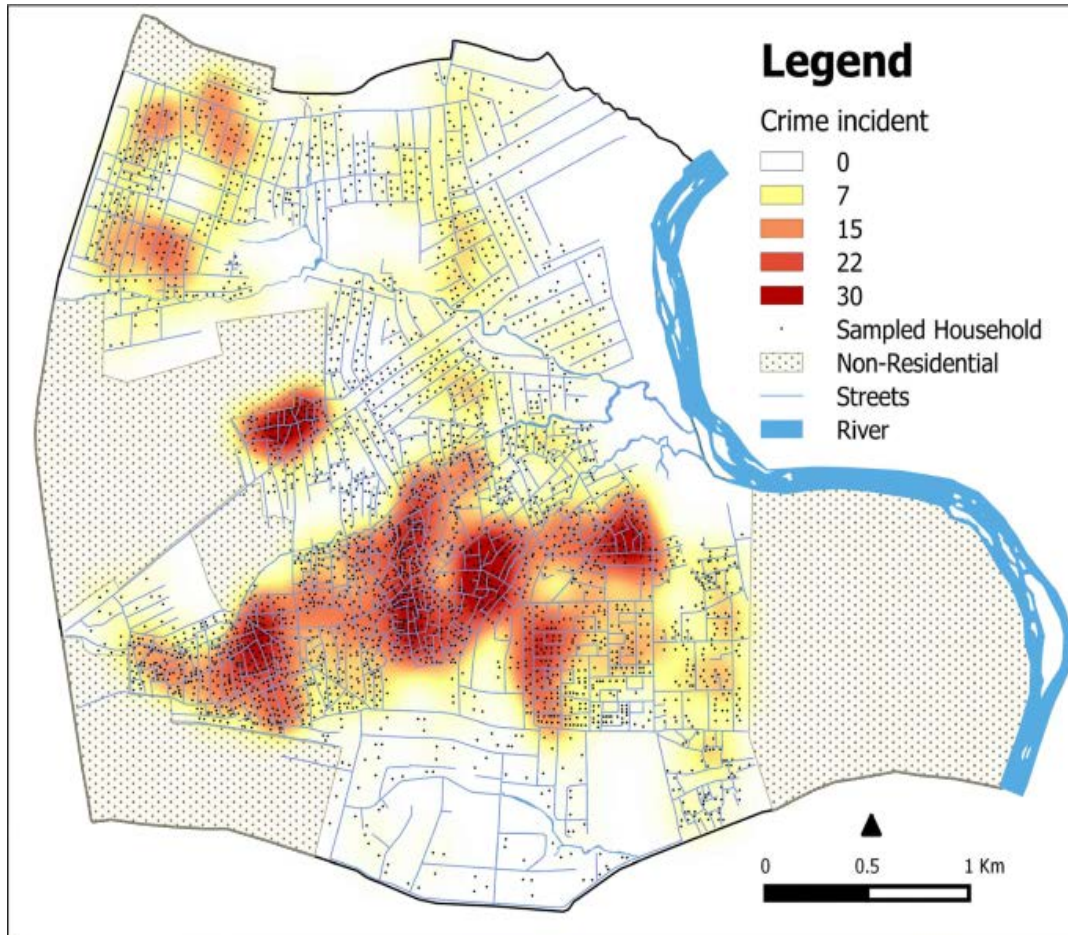
- Sherman, Gartin & Buerger coined the term criminology of place when they discovered that 3 percent of micro places – that they called "hotspots" – produced 50 percent of all calls for service to police

- Weisburd highlighted that the single most important empirical observation in the criminology of place is that crime concentrates at very small units of geography

- At least 20 percent of places generate about 50 percent of all problems and about 10 percent of places generate about 80 percent of all problems

- As the size of the place unit declines (that is from community to street block to address to household) crime becomes even more concentrated.

- The flip side of the law of crime concentration is that there are a large number of streets, homes, apartment blocks and parks (up to 95%) in even the worst communities that are relatively crime free.

Crime Concentration - Victims

- Revictimization (or repeat victimization) is well understood in the criminological literature

- Small percentage of the population suffer large percentages of all criminal victimisation

- By preventing repeat incidents of house breaks, the overall burglary rate could be reduced by at least 25 per cent

- Police training should incorporate a module that explains Routine Activity Theory

Crime Concentration Data Matters

- Hotspots policing, problem-oriented policing, and intelligence-led policing are highly data-driven strategies that rely on the skills of crime analysts to reduce crime by focusing resources on high crime places, high-risk offenders, and repeat victims

  - Police administrative data
  - Linked other administrative data – and capacity to link
  - Self report surveys
  - Victim surveys
  - Community/Household surveys

CONCEPTUALIZING POLICE RESPONSES TO PROBLEMS
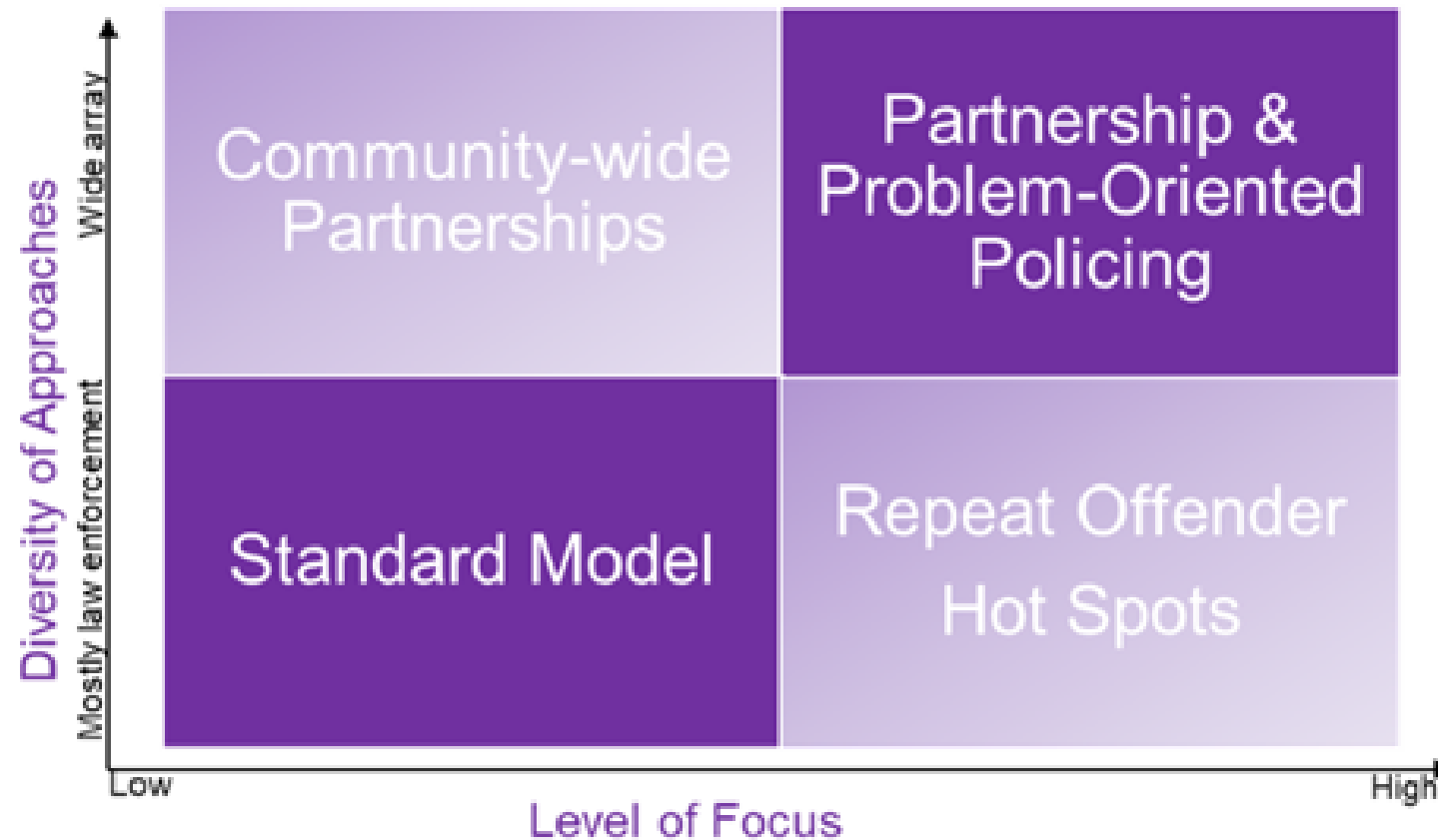
Source: Adapted from Eck and Weisburd, 2004

A FOCUS ON HIGH RISK PEOPLE/GROUPS

Focussed Deterrence and Repeat Offender Programs – training needs to focus on partnerships

Targeted bail checks and stings – training needs to focus on backfire effects and negative effects for young people and people of color

Young people – training on diversion skills; shaping police responses to youth curfews laws that are unlikely to reduce crime
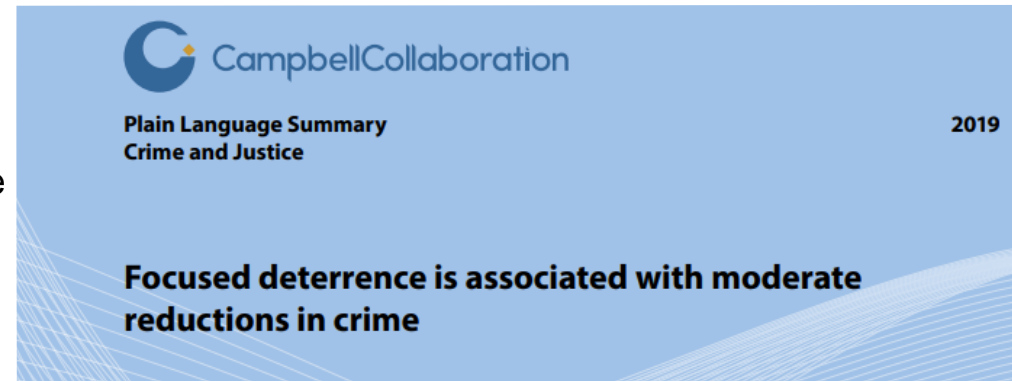
Stop Question and Frisk – how to curtail police powers

Raids – only short term effects & the problems with no knock searches

DV offenders – collecting information about possible suicide ideation for risk assessment tools

Drug offenders – proactive arrests unlikely to work

High risk organizations/groups/gangs – working in partnership with other entities

CampbellCollaboration

Plain Language Summary
Crime and Justice   2019

Focused deterrence is associated with moderate reductions in crime

A relatively small number of groups and persons are responsible for a disproportionate share of crime. Focused deterrence strategies attempt to reduce offending behaviour for specific types of crime. These strategies are associated with moderate overall reductions in crime.

Crime is not displaced to other areas, rather it is more likely that there is a diffusion of crime control benefits to adjacent areas and similar people and groups.

What is this review about?
Focused deterrence strategies combine law enforcement, community mobilisation, and social services in an attempt to reduce offending behaviour for specific crime types. A key feature of this crime control strategy is that the consequences of continued criminal offending and available social services are directly communicated to targeted subjects.

This review examines the relationship between

## Evidence on Training Police to Respond to High Risk People/Groups

15 studies – 15 RCTS and 8 quasi

- Recruit training is enhanced with virtual and simulated conditions

- Inductive training leads to better offender profiling skills

- For training in responding to DV – Duluth Domestic Abuse training – no difference for E and C on time spent at DFV incidents with victims, the number of cases accepted for prosecution, and the number of cases resulting in convictions

Data to Assess Effectiveness in Police Responding to High Risk People/Groups

- Forecasting models (e.g. Berk & co) use statistical learning techniques to predict future seriousness, specifically focusing on forecasting the likelihood of probation and parolees being arrested for murder

- Police need to forge partnerships with university-based statisticians & conduct specialized recruiting AND develop training programs to have sufficiently qualified analysts
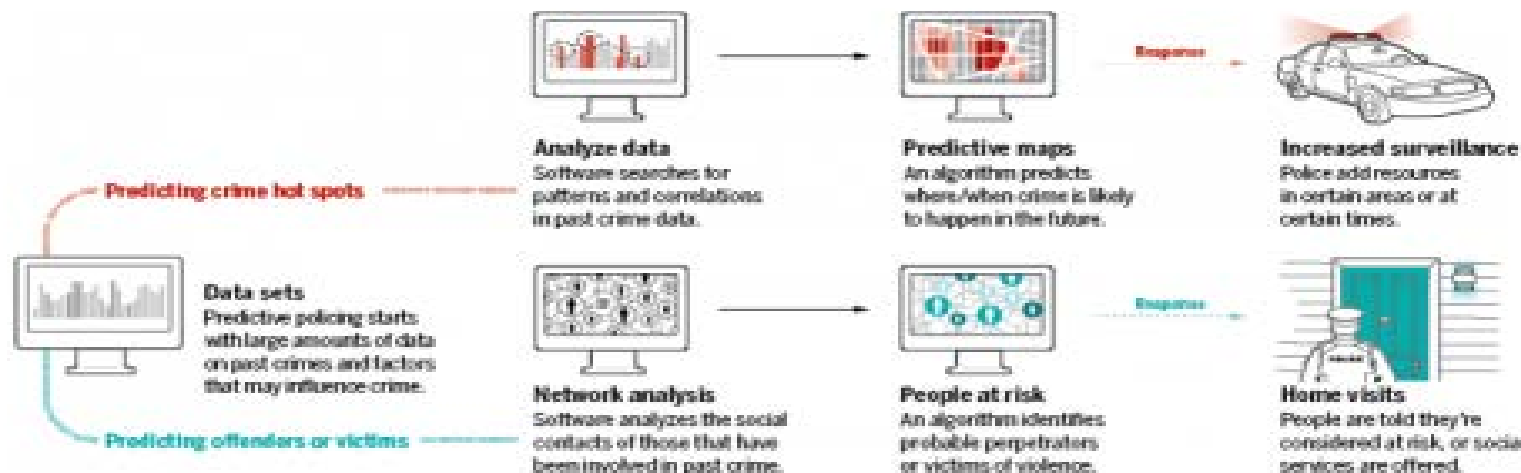
A FOCUS ON CRIME-PRONE PLACES

- Tactics include hotspots policing, problem-oriented policing, third party policing, intelligence-led policing, broken windows policing, civil remedies, and predictive policing – all require a high degree of sophistication in crime analysis

- Policing entertainment precincts – training should include
  - methods for interacting with intoxicated and violent civilians
  - methods for diffusing fights
  - methods for de-escalation of volatile incidents
  - effective approaches to building positive working relationships with business owners

- Police need training to foster good working relationships with property owners, building inspectors, environmental regulators, education department representatives, community groups, insurance companies, business leaders, and local government personnel.

- Road policing - targeting interventions to the micro places during the high risk times that generate the most harm (as measured by death, trauma and serious injury) requires leadership education and training in the power few and the law of crime concentration

- Crowd control - joint training in multi-agency cooperation

- Online communities - child exploitation material (CEM) and cyber scams – building cyber skills will be a big part of the future

Evidence on Training Police in Responding to High Risk Places

- N = 1 RCT training program of police to increase the capacity to undertake geographic profiling -> experimental participants made significant improvements in their predictive accuracy when trained in geographic profiling techniques

- Four studies (N = 1 RCT; N = 3 Quasi) evaluated police training around community engagement -> more citizens and police from the beats in the training condition were more likely to communicate ideas for solutions to community problems than those in the experimental condition

- Training for protecting public safety during crowd events - educate staff on the expected roles, responsibilities, and performance when participating in these types of events followed by simulated exercises

- Robust evaluations of procedural justice training programs –

  - Greater Manchester experimental group had better attitudes to delivering quality of service, had more empathy and rapport with victims and understood the importance of fair decision making

  - Rosenbaum Quality Interaction Program on recruits' behaviours - training was effective, especially for interactions with young people - greater respectfulness towards community members, more procedural justice during traffic stops, better communication

Data to Assess Effectiveness in Police Responding to High Risk Places

- Ratcliffe - need for training of police to enhance evaluation skills

- Partnering with academe - practicality of getting that skill level into departments remains a challenge.

A FOCUS ON PROTECTING VICTIMS

- **DV victims**

  - specialized training in domestic violence helps to improve officers' empathy with victims, understanding of the severity of domestic violence, and recognition of the need for police to ensure victims' safety

  - positive influences of training wears off over time without reinforcement

  - training in police working as a partner in multi-agency teams e.g. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) that aim to reduce harm to high-risk domestic violence victims

- **Child victims**

  - dominant theme of cross agency collaboration with police training focused on the processes and practices of working across agencies

  - Police interview training - good questioning comes from specialised training programs incorporating ongoing spaced practice exercises, exemplars of best practice, expert instruction and feedback

- **People with mental illnesses**

  - Training to support police in their efforts to better understand and respond to Training police to better serve people with disabilities needs to include up-to-date definitions and terminology, cultural sensitivity training, effective methods of de-escalation and problem-solving as well as regular refresher courses.

- **Elderly victims**

  - Reassurance Policing - well suited for elderly people who feel vulnerable in their community

Evidence on Training Police to Protect High Risk Victims

- Significant gap in RCTs on training police officers to respond to domestic and family violence and sexual crimes

- 17 studies impact evaluations of training for police interactions with people with mental health problems – meta-analysis showed that CIT trained officers transported more mentally ill persons to community-based services rather than arresting them compared to untrained officers.

- police trained in being able to recognize persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) had more confidence interacting with persons with ASD.

- N = 3 RCTs that tested training regimes in investigative interviewing
  - trained officers more likely to conduct interviews in line with the training than untrained officers
  - trained interviewers used one or more of the tactics learnt in training
  - trained police more effective at increasing the use of open-ended questions than untrained police

Data to Assess Effectiveness in Police Protecting Vulnerable People

- Data linkage and communication across government agencies and service providers is critical for police to be able to identify those people with multiple contacts with different services and are likely to be people most at risk.

- Reluctance to link administrative data or to create systems that are fully integrated and capable of identifying multiple touch points of people coming into contact with police and other agencies, such as child protection, housing, disability services and health

- Fusion centers have been in action for many years and used to share information around homeland security issues – would be good to develop for building more robust and accurate case tracking systems, particularly for vulnerable people

CONCLUDING REMARKS

1. Police have a better chance of using their discretion and police powers in ways that are fair and effective if they have the education and training to build a better understanding of

   - criminological theory

   - the mechanisms that cause crime problems

   - the scientific evidence as to what works and what can harm

   - how some laws they are called upon to enforce can cause harm – how might they use their discretion to minimize harm?

2. Universal, cross-cutting themes - crime analysis, working in multi-agency teams, and foundational communication skills

3. Bennett's (2020) review identified just105 eligible training evaluation studies in the Global Policing Database -- given the extensive cost of training, it is curious as to why so few training programs have been evaluated using robust evaluation methods.

4. Science doesn't sit still, and nor should the education and training of police in the future.