

QUICK READ SYNOPSIS

To Better Serve and Protect: Improving Police Practices

Special Editor: WESLEY G. SKOGAN
Northwestern University

Volume 593, May 2004

Prepared by Herb Fayer (Consultant)
and Robert Pearson (Executive Editor)

Trends in the Policing Industry

Edward R. Maguire, George Mason University,
and William R. King, Bowling Green State University

Background

There are three general areas in which transformations occur in police organizations.

- Goals: potential transformations include changes in the domain of police relative to other providers of security services, responses to terrorism, increasing levels of militarization, a shift toward police as information brokers, increasing involvement in mentoring children, and increased community involvement.
- Boundaries (the things that distinguish the group from outsiders and members from nonmembers): potential transformations include overall growth, employing more civilians and granting them new responsibilities, and increasing the diversity in the race, gender, and education of the workforce.
 - Boundaries also change when organizations the police deal with expand or contract or when the police agency's organizational boundaries change due to consolidations, closing units or opening new ones, new partnerships, and the involvement of the federal government.
- Activity systems (the means by which members accomplish work): potential transformations occur in administrative apparatuses, technological innovation, and organizational behavior.

- Research* The police research industry is not currently organized or equipped to systematically detect and monitor trends in policing.
- There is a lack of focus by those who carry out and fund police research on the development of a systematic, cohesive, empirically defensible, longitudinal data-collection strategy at the organization or industry level.
 - We are unable to measure, detect, or explain major changes in policing with any scientific confidence.
 - The volume of research on police organizations is miniscule compared with that on officers, work, and effectiveness.
 - Some of the long-term trends are so abstract or subtle that they defy most of our present techniques for detecting them.
 - Sometimes the nature of change is long periods of constancy interrupted by short periods of rapid change, which are almost invisible to short-term investigations or cross sectional research designs.
- Recommendations* The overwhelming recommendation is that the police research industry needs to improve its ability to detect, measure, and monitor trends in policing.
- Police researchers, think tanks, and those who organize and fund police research need to implement changes designed to ensure the systematic collection and analysis of longitudinal data useful for understanding long-term trends.
 - Where there are good data already collected, they need to be systematically assembled and analyzed. For instance, the FBI's Police Employees data, which are maintained in separate cross sections, need to be combined to conduct longitudinal analyses. This and other data sets need to be made more readily available and in a more analyzable format.
 - Existing data collections can be improved and better managed to ensure data integrity.
 - There is a need to collect historical data from select police agencies to understand how police agencies change or resist change.
 - There is a need for repeated national surveys of random samples of police officers and citizens to detect industry-level trends.
- Agencies to Involve* Four agencies are well positioned to implement solutions to the above problems: the FBI, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), and the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).
- BJS and NIJ could provide funding incentives to encourage researchers to pool multiwave surveys for studying change and then make the data available to others through ICPSR.
 - BJS and NIJ could also provide incentives to create or assemble historical/longitudinal data sets of police agencies.
 - ICPSR could host a summer session on using longitudinal data to draw inferences about trends in the policing industry.
 - The FBI and BJS could institute fellowships for scholars to work alongside agency data-collection staff and statisticians for short periods to make the data collections better for researchers.
 - An advisory board should be created to make recommendations to BJS staff on revisions to the instruments, sampling procedures, and basic research decisions in their Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics data series.
- NOTE: This investment in larger-scale longitudinal research will pay many scholarly dividends, while making police research more relevant to the policing industry.

What Can Police Do to Reduce Crime, Disorder, and Fear?

David Weisburd, The University of Maryland,
and John E. Eck, University of Cincinnati

Background

The standard model of policing is based on two assumptions:

- Police agencies using the standard model will often measure success in terms of whether a certain number of patrol cars are on the street at certain times. An unfocused “one size fits all” approach to crime prevention can be effective (for example, random patrol across all parts of a jurisdiction).
- Other agencies use response time to citizen calls as a measure. The primary tools of the police are found in their law enforcement powers.

NOTE: The standard model can lead police to become more concerned with how services are allocated than whether they have an impact on public safety.

- These agencies generally employ a limited range of approaches. The threat of arrest and punishment are the core of crime prevention. Despite the continued reliance of many police agencies on the standard model of policing, little evidence exists that it is effective in controlling crime and disorder or reducing fear.
- There are five broad strategies that have been the focus of standard model research: increasing the agency size, random patrols, rapid response, generalized investigations of crime, and generally applied intensive enforcement and arrest policies.

Innovations

Recent innovations in policing have tended to expand beyond the standard model with three dominant trends.

Community policing:

- Studies do not support the view that community meetings, neighborhood watch, storefront offices, or newsletters reduce crime.
- It does reduce community perceptions of disorder and reduce fear.
- Door-to-door visits do reduce crime and disorder.
- Officer demeanor has a positive effect on compliance.

NOTE: There is no research agenda yet that shows strong confidence in the effectiveness of community policing. Community policing may be described as an overall approach that tries to expand the tool box of policing to include the resources of the community.

- Overall, the evidence does not provide strong support for the position that community policing approaches impact strongly on crime or disorder.
- Stronger support is found for the ability of community policing tactics to reduce fear of crime.

Hot-spots policing:

- Policing that is focused on hot spots can reduce crime and disorder.
- Displacement of crime to other areas does not occur.

NOTE: The research evidence is strongest in hot-spots policing. Hot spots policing involves an increase in the level of focus, but often restricts the tools of the police to law enforcement.

- There is strong experimental evidence that policing that is focused on hot spots can reduce crime and disorder.
- Displacement of crime to other areas is generally not reported.

- However, “diffusion of crime control benefits” to areas not directly targeted has been identified in many studies.

Problem-oriented policing:

• Problem solving appears to add to the positive effects of hot-spots policing.
NOTE: The research available suggests that this area can be effective and should be expanded. Problem-oriented policing when properly implemented increases the focus of police efforts and expands the tools of policing much beyond traditional law enforcement approaches.

- There is a growing body of research evidence that problem-oriented policing is an effective approach for reducing crime, disorder and fear.

Conclusion

Knowledge of many of the core practices of American policing remains uncertain.

- Police research must become more systematic and more experimental if it is to provide solid answers to important questions of practice and policy.

Lawful Policing

Wesley G. Skogan, Northwestern University,
and Tracey L. Meares, University of Chicago

Background

People expect the police to enforce laws in order to promote safety; to reduce crime, victimization, and fear; and to redress wrongs, but no one believes that the police should have unlimited power to do it.

- Exercise of police power is largely at the discretion of the police officers.
- Everything about policing makes this exercise of discretion hard to monitor and control.
- We know little about what police do in the field.
- Police are expected to use good judgment rather than enforce the letter of the law.
- Because police work is outside of the public eye, they have opportunities to engage in corrupt activities.
- Police tend to obey the law, and it appears their honesty has gotten better over time, but there is still the need to control police lawlessness, and research is needed to learn the implications of police policies aimed at controlling lawlessness.

Areas of Research

This article reviews what is known about police lawlessness in several key areas.

- Interrogations: In this area are Miranda rights and confession policies, and studies show that these restrictions on police reduce the number of confessions only about 4 to 16 percent and that other evidence is usually available, and the impact on policing is much lower than these percentages suggest.
- Searches and seizures: The exclusion rule puts pressure on police to limit how they collect evidence because a case can be thrown out when evidence is improperly obtained.
 - Police skirt these rules when they can in the interest of deterring crime by jailing the truly guilty.
 - Lost convictions are infrequent due to improper police activities.

- Excessive and lethal force: Police are now limited in when they can use force and are fearful of civil suits based on deadly or excessive use of force.
- Corruption: Corruption is hard to control and hard to study. Some questions are as follows:
 - Is corruption organized or freelance?
 - Is it widespread or only in pockets?
 - Is it linked to political corruption or just in police ranks?
 - What seems to lead to corruption? Prohibition was one of the greater corrupting factors as is drug and prostitution enforcement where opportunity for corruption is everywhere.
- Racial profiling: The problem here is intertwined with the fact that police have a great deal of discretion in performing their job.
 - It is not surprising that their judgments are influenced by racial, gender, or ethnic stereotypes.
 - Because there is no accepted definition of racial profiling, it is hard to determine the extent of it in practice.
 - More studies are needed in this area.

Police Reform

The road to police reform is largely an internal one, featuring training, supervision, internal inspections, performance measures, and policy making.

- To date, there has been little research on the effectiveness of the above managerial strategies to secure officer compliance with policies.
- In addition to internal processes, there is the effect of political and organizational pressures to “get tough” on crime.
- In reaction to the perceived inability of departments to manage themselves, external pressure can be mounted in an attempt to rein in police.
 - Prosecutors can bring charges against individual officers.
 - Civil rights suits can also be brought.
 - Department of Justice investigations can have a great effect on practices and policies.
 - Citizen-complaint review agencies provide another form of external control of police.

Enhancing Police Legitimacy

Tom R. Tyler, New York University

Background

The police must rely upon widespread, voluntary, law-abiding behavior to allow them to concentrate on unlawful people and dangerous situations.

- In addition, the public supports the police by helping to identify criminals and by reporting crimes.
- The public joins with the police in informal efforts to combat crime and address community problems such as with “neighborhood watch.”
- Public cooperation is only loosely linked to perceptions about how good the police are at their job and to views about whether cooperation helps catch criminals.

- Encouraging Cooperation* How can the police encourage cooperation and support? People have internalized values upon which the police might draw for support.
- A key value that people hold is their widespread support for the legitimacy of the police—the belief that the police are entitled to call upon the public to follow the law and help to combat crime.
 - People feel responsible for following the directives of legitimate authorities—it is not just power that makes people obey. In such a law-abiding society, only minimal resources are then needed to maintain social order.
 - Such voluntary deference is more reliable than instrumentally motivated compliance, and it does not vary as a function of the situation involved.
- Legitimacy-Based Policing* Legitimacy-based policing has clear advantages for the police and the community. It produces self-regulatory behavior.
- Currently, there is a low level of confidence in the police and the courts.
 - There is also a racial gap with whites expressing higher confidence than African Americans or Hispanics.
 - These negative views undermine the possibility of legitimacy-based policing.
- Enhancing Legitimacy* It is important to try to understand how the police shape public views about their legitimacy.
- Effectiveness and procedural justice are the keys.
 - Citizens who receive respectful treatment are almost twice as likely to comply than those receiving disrespect.
 - If the police demonstrate their commitment to making an informed decision by seeking input and factual information, then citizens are more than twice as likely to comply.
 - The impact of procedural fairness and effectiveness is greatest early in an encounter.
- Procedural Justice* Studies consistently point to several elements as key to people's procedural-justice judgments.
- Being allowed to participate by explaining their situations.
 - Seeing decisions made objectively based on facts.
 - Being treated with dignity.
 - Trusting the motives of decision makers.
- NOTE: People have a strong desire to view the authorities as benevolent and caring. This view is tested during a personal encounter, and their views are shaped by whether they receive the behavior they expect from the police.
- A Law-Abiding Society* The important role of legitimacy in shaping people's law-related behavior indicates the possibility of creating a law-abiding society in which citizens voluntarily obey the law and respect the decisions of authorities.
- This type of cooperation is based on people's feelings about appropriate social behavior and is not linked to the risks of apprehension and punishment.
 - Procedural fairness leads to such voluntary compliance and cooperation.

Controlling Street-Level Police Discretion

Stephen D. Mastrofski, George Mason University

- Background* Police leaders and other public officials have long been obsessed with exercising a substantial degree of influence over how policing is practiced at the street level. Currently, there is concern about
- how to eliminate racial bias,
 - how to get officers to engage in more community policing and problem solving,
 - how to get officers to make arrests when the law demands it, and
 - how to better control the discretion of the police.
- NOTE: The research fails to take into account relevant features of the policy and social environments in which officers operate. Things such as police unions, civil rights organizations, and the federal justice system.
- Discretion Control* Building useful theories of discretion control can draw on a wide range of disciplines and from the literature on police reform.
- The process might begin by considering who attempts to influence police discretion and then inventorying the mechanisms of influence available.
 - One cannot assume that there is a singular, hierarchically determined leadership that sets goals but that there may be many groups of players with influence.
 - One must allow for the possibility of “organized anarchy,” where the distribution of power is in flux or no dominant coalition emerges, creating ambiguity for street-level decision makers.
 - Formal organizations establish structures, incentives and sanctions, supervision, and so on, to coordinate and control its members.
 - Police organizations find control of this sort highly problematic because the organizations are limited in their capacity to manipulate what employees really care about and the systems of control are cumbersome, conflicting, and loose.
 - Veterans tell rookies to forget what they learned in the academy.
 - The result is a system that tries to control undesirable behaviors rather than promote desired ones.
 - To promote desired behaviors, it has become popular to promote control through legitimacy rather than raw power in a transformational approach where the officer’s compliance results from a personal transformation instead of compliance in exchange for something of value.
- Police Culture* Another organizational element to consider is the police culture.
- Culture should be looked at as an independent variable over time and place to see its impact on officer discretion.
- Environmental Influences* Efforts within the organization to exert control over police discretion do not occur in isolation from larger environmental influences such as the neighborhood, the city, the actions of local police officials, the appellate rulings, and so on. Researchers need to investigate things like the following:
- What sorts of control systems are most effective in a crisis, and how long are they effective after the critical event?
 - How do appellate court rulings affect daily practices of patrol officers?

- Generalization Problem* In technical terms, the extant research has a generalizability problem.
- We do not have a large and diverse storehouse of comparable studies so we can say with confidence how universal the findings are.
 - The research on police discretion is biased regarding the types of agencies included—most studies are on relatively large forces.
 - The research tends to occur at more progressive agencies that have less discomfort exposing themselves to scrutiny, and researchers look to work with those who are “the best” rather than those with problems.
 - The measures of police discretion are, by and large, missing standards by which to judge.
 - We need to ask, “What do we want police to do, and what explains variations in what they do?”
- Police Arrest Research* Researchers know very little about the extent of enforcement “error,” its patterns, and the things that influence those patterns.
- Measuring the patterns would be more useful than whether an arrest was made.
 - Selectivity in leniency of whether an arrest is made is a part of racial profiling.
 - Evaluations could be made based on expectations such as reducing the likelihood of future offending.
- Hot-Spots Policing* One of the policing strategies identified as having strong evidence of effectiveness is hot-spots policing.
- There are two models:
 - The low-discretion model gives the responsibility to supervisors to decide which areas need hot-spots policing.
 - The high-discretion model puts the choice at the street level.
 - It is both paramount and possible to measure aspects of police discretion that really matter to those who control it, but there are many parties with varied values and priorities for which to account.
 - Police researchers can help facilitate a dialogue among representatives of the various groups.
 - The product of the dialogue can provide a clear picture of differences and common ground in what should be measured in police discretion.
- Conclusion* There is a lot to say about the importance of controlling police discretion and little to say about how to do it effectively or wisely.
- The highest priority is developing measures that matter to those who exercise it, oversee it, and experience it.
 - Theories about discretion control and expanding the generalizability of findings are important.
 - Those with the funds to shape the direction of policing research must establish this issue as high priority.

Environment and Organization: Reviving a Perspective on the Police

David A. Klingler, University of Missouri–St. Louis

Background

Both organizational and environmental forces exert effects on police behavior. The interplay between the two shape police practices.

- Police deal with a long list of transactions from directing traffic, to arresting suspects, to testifying in court, to dealing with reporters.
- Many of their dealings are often antagonistic, and police are not entirely in control of their interactions with others.
- As a consequence, police actions can be substantially influenced by the nature of the tasks, the features of the external entities with which they interact, and the broader social contexts in which these interactions occur.

NOTE: Researchers Reiss and Bordua noted that a thorough understanding of the organizational properties of police departments requires knowledge of how environmental forces penetrate and influence law enforcement agencies.

Research Difficulties

The vast differences in the tasks that police agencies undertake, the nature of the governmental entities to which they are attached, their size, and other features make it difficult for researchers to generalize about the American police.

- We lack comprehensive data about many aspects of police departments—the vast majority provide no information to any national data bank.
- Among the agencies that do provide data, the list of organizational properties they have reported on is a rather short one.
- The costs of research are so high that it limits the number of agencies that researchers can study, and the result is that some otherwise fruitful research designs have not included enough agencies to adequately examine the role that various structural features of police organizations and the environments in which they operate play in determining police practices.
- For researchers, it is difficult to generalize the results of a study across all the various types of police agencies and environments in the United States.
- Police agencies and the people within them are often unwilling to give access to outsiders into their inner workings.

NOTE: Even as some more progressive departments have allowed access, researchers have not shown much interest in organizational-environmental research. Rather, research has focused on micro-level questions about the role of situational factors such as how the race and gender of citizens affect police interactions.

Organizational Factors

Factors that affect the operations of organizations and the actions of their members include the following:

- Bureaucratization
- Task complexity
- Occupational differentiation
- Functional differentiation
- Nature of compliance regimes
- Span of control
- Technology

- Coupling
- Culture
- Professionalism
- Size

NOTE: Researchers and practitioners have suggested that many structural aspects of police organizations besides their size might well affect how officers carry out their duties. Unfortunately, the research to date is not sufficient to draw any firm conclusions.

Other Factors

There has been some research on other factors.

- There is research showing that rules and regulations can substantially affect how officers act on the streets.
- Research shows that shooting policies affect how officers use their firearms.
- How officers exercise their arrest powers has also been studied in relation to policies.

Environmental Factors

The notion that changes in criminal statutes can change how officers execute their duties when policing domestic violence highlights the fact that forces external to police agencies hold the potential to influence officers' actions.

- Research indicates the courts can influence police practices.
- The local political landscape can have an influence, but studies show departments have a substantial ability to resist efforts of elected leaders to change their practices.
- Aspects of communities such as socioeconomic status can affect police actions.

The Integrative Perspective

Work done by Klinger asserted that police agencies are loosely coupled organizations in which patrol officers are largely free from administrative constraints and that levels of crime and other sorts of deviance in the areas officers patrol are crucial determinants of how they carry out their duties.

- Klinger's key contention is that the social ecology of the communities officers' work drives how they will police. The theory does not take into account that community characteristics besides crime and deviance may also affect officers' actions, but it could certainly be expanded to do so.
- This theory also has room to incorporate external factors such as legal statutes.
- Differences of other sorts can also be incorporated by adding them to the list of macro variables; things such as city size, their degree of racial inequality, and their levels of violence.

Conclusion

Because police researchers have paid little attention to the organizational and environmental sources of police action, we have limited evidence about which aspects of police organizations and their environments actually affect police action and even less about the processes through which they exert their effects.

- The challenge is to develop more complete integrated models that precisely specify how macro-level organizational and environmental properties exert effects at the micro level of police interactions with citizens.

Science and Politics in Police Research

Samuel Walker, University of Nebraska, Omaha

Background

Police stand at the center of several issues that touch raw nerves in American politics such as race relations and the tangled relationship between race and crime. Public concern about these issues has greatly influenced police research.

- The relationship between police research and the external political environment is extremely complex.
 - Political factors have had a major impact in shaping the agenda of police research.
 - Research findings have shaped public discourse and policy.
 - The influence of politics has greatly enriched social science research on the police.
 - In the article, this involves the influence on research agenda setting rather than the suppression of truth.

Four Propositions

The author presents four propositions about the complex interplay between science and politics.

- Political factors have had a major impact in shaping the agenda of police research.
- Once a question or set of questions is introduced into police research, the process of normal science begins to operate.
 - Research findings raise unresolved issues.
 - The research on new issues is not externally influenced.
- The impact of external political influence on research has been beneficial and enriching.
 - External factors force researchers to address issues previously neglected.
- Police research has influenced the external political environment and played a significant role in shaping public policy.

Case Studies

Several case studies support the above four propositions.

- Racial profiling illustrates propositions 1, 2, and 3. It has forced on the research community enriched research on police. Scholars have been forced to direct attention to the neglected aspect of police-citizen interactions and have been forced to address different methodological issues related not just to the study of traffic enforcement but, more important, to the larger issue of racial and ethnic discrimination.
- The American Bar Foundation study of the police subculture in Gary, Indiana, illustrates proposition 4 regarding the impact of research on public policy. Evidence called into question the prevailing assumptions about the role of the police institution and set in motion thinking that led to reconceptualization of that role.
- Community policing also illustrates proposition 4 as the research influenced public policy and caused a complete reorientation of the role of the police.

NOTE: Larry Sherman argues that the best result would be a process in which researchers would address issues raised by police practitioners, and the practitioners would value and use the fruits of the research.

- Conclusion* What observations can be made regarding the four propositions?
- External political influence in shaping the agenda of police research is not only pervasive but probably inevitable.
 - There are two forms of politically driven agenda:
 - Racial profiling illustrates the form where an issue in the streets is thrust onto the national agenda.
 - The second form is where research is funded as a result of a policy initiative such as Clinton's funding of research to promote his community policing platform.
- This does not necessarily mean that research is blatantly manipulated to make a political point.
- Despite the heavy influence of external politics on the research agenda, the case of community policing indicates that research can shape policy.
- NOTE: There are important questions that merit further inquiry:
- Particularly important is whether the agenda of police research is more heavily influenced by external political considerations than is the agenda of other politically sensitive fields such as public education and social welfare.
 - The impact of government policies, and war in particular, on research in the natural sciences.
 - The relationship between the research and public policy and the larger political environment.
-

Research and Policing: The Infrastructure and Political Economy of Federal Funding

Lawrence W. Sherman, University of Pennsylvania

- Police Practices* Of all the changes in police practices since 1980, one of the most dramatic was massive growth of knowledge about the causes and prevention of crime.
- Science learned more about crime since 1980 than in the preceding two centuries of criminology.
 - Many indications show that police practices are more science based than ever.
 - Unless the infrastructure of production and consumption of science for police work is substantially revised, we face a rapid decline in the growth of police science and an attendant loss of any continuing public benefits.
 - The political economy of science policy has divorced scientific products from their intended users in ways that make usage less likely.
- Research Comparisons* Understanding the record of other areas of science policy provides an appropriate context for reviewing evaluation policy for police practices.
- Agriculture and medicine had federal support to guide research policy and to ensure that research was closely connected to practice.
 - Educators neither were partners with scientists nor took up the scientific method themselves. Research in education has had much less impact on teaching than it has had on agriculture and medicine.
 - The history of federal policy for education research resembles its counterpart in policing more than does "ag" or medicine.

- Reviewing all three disciplines shows that the political economy and infrastructure of federally funded research play a vital role in the sustained success and support for science.

Federal Science Policy

Since 1980, the primary responsibility for policing policy lay at the NIJ and was shaped by National Research Council reports published by the National Academy of Sciences.

- These reports focused mainly on research methods and strategies and did not address the infrastructure of evaluation research, especially the key issue of partnerships between scientists and service providers.
 - The new NIJ Crime Control Theory program solicited proposals for research on the effects of criminal sanctions and policing on crime. With some of the nation's leading criminologists on the peer-review panel, the program funded randomized experiments on the effects of police practices and was a major success.
 - NIJ reinforced the program with national conferences designed to brief police leaders on research results and this engaged professionals in the conduct of science more than ever before.
 - The Drug Markets Analysis Program (DMAP) was an example of success on two criteria.
 - A number of highly cited publications were produced, thus contributing to a body of scientific knowledge.
 - DMAP engaged police leadership in doing science.

This was the best example of how policing research could mimic what was done in "ag" and medicine, yet it was limited in scope and was replaced by a program that created partnerships in forty-one police agencies, the Locally Initiated Research Program (LIRP).

DMAP vs. LIRP

The differences between DMAP and LIRP that accounted for a lack of publications and involvement of police leaders were the following:

- All DMAP programs had peer review panels; LIPR grants did not.
- DMAP funding was much higher per site.
- DMAP projects supported substantial research time as well as police operational time; LIRP grants did not.
- LIRP projects did not attract the sustained attention of police chiefs.

NOTE: The LIRP was hampered by the lack of long-term funding for successful partnerships.

Applying Science to Practice

From 1971 on, a generation of police officers worked in the context of research as a major and highly valued activity of their agency. In the 1990s, a new generation of better-educated crime policy leaders increasingly turned to research for ideas and solutions to problems. The idea of the professionally informed and educated police chief emerged.

- The findings of major programs to test police practices became widely known among police executives and their top managers.
- So too did the results of basic research such as the hot spots of crime.
- New theories of police practice went from university to police agencies.
- Research as a career path in policing suffers from lack of long-term funding of the kind one sees in medicine. This needs to be addressed to get stability in funding and to promote the use of research as the standard of evidence for making policy.

*Proposal:
NIJ Centers
for Crime
Prevention*

Programs like Kansas City's work in preventive patrol suggest what could happen with long-term commitment of research funding to large-city police departments.

- These departments could enter into long-term relationships with major universities and research organizations.
- Each U.S. city over 250,000 in population would have a crime center, coordinated and funded by the NIJ. Twenty states without a city this size would each have a center too.
- This would create a national network of eighty-seven research centers, which could encourage more rapid accumulation and synthesis of knowledge about preventing crime.
- Each center would be a resource for evidence about the local crime and justice issues.
- Local crime officials could get together for monthly reviews, and the NIJ would also have a key platform to engage leaders in research.
- These centers could participate in new national programs allowing for randomized trials using standard protocols and even random assignment of cities.

*Creating the
Infrastructure*

The expiration of the statutory authority for the Department of Justice creates an opportunity for restructuring the political economy of police research, along with the rest of federal support for the social science of crime and its prevention.

- The plan for NIJ crime centers could be enacted with three key steps:
 - substantial funding levels;
 - allocation by research consumer institution—each center would be budgeted for fixed proportions of its funding to be dedicated to crime prevention, police, prosecution, urban courts, jails, prisons, and probation and parole; and
 - engagement of national organizations representing research consumer groups—to play a role in organizing conferences, hotlines, and help desks and disseminating research results.

Benefits

With online access to better info about policing, all citizens would be better informed about the issues.

- This could foster better deliberative democracy about the kind of police we all want and what it takes to achieve our goals.
- The dedication of resources for creating and disseminating knowledge could address issues of police misconduct and discrimination as well as issues of police effectiveness and efficiency.
- The wide range of research would be in collaboration with police agencies, and agencies would receive core funding.

NOTE: How the funding of basic research on crime would fare at a national level remains a concern.

- The pessimistic side says basic research funding would lose out.
- The optimists say that social science research has been cut so far back that this plan could only improve the prospects for basic research.
- In the end, if police leaders and practitioners become engaged as both consumers and producers of social science research, their demand for all kinds of research may grow accordingly.