

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE
WORKSHOP ON POLICING RESEARCH
Washington, D. C.
November 28-29, 2006
Workshop Discussion Summary**

Introduction

On Nov. 28, 2006, the U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' National Institute of Justice (NIJ) convened a workshop involving experienced policing researchers and research-minded police officials to advise NIJ on setting a research agenda for the next decade. In preparation for the workshop, papers on future issues in three major law enforcement areas were commissioned and distributed to participants prior to the workshop.

The one and a half day workshop involved some 40 knowledgeable and experienced individuals from academic institutions and law enforcement agencies across the country. Christopher Stone, Guggenheim Professor of the Practice of Criminal Justice at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, served as workshop facilitator.

Topical Presentations

During the first day of the meeting, the three papers that were commissioned by the NIJ for the workshop were presented by their authors and discussed. The issue papers, their authors, and highlights of topics covered are as follows:¹

Police Organization and Management Issues for the Next Decade (Stephen D. Mastrofski, Center for Justice Leadership and Management, George Mason University).

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218584.pdf>

This paper covered such topics as recruitment, training, department structure and organization, police management, leadership, use of technology and information, and community policing;

Police Accountability: Current Issues and Research Needs (Samuel Walker, University of Nebraska at Omaha).

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218583.pdf>

This paper addressed such topics as integrity, use of force, performance measures, police unions, and police and community relationship;

Police Innovation and Crime Prevention: Lessons Learned from Police Research Over the Past 20 Years (Anthony A. Braga, PhD, Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; David L. Weisburd, PhD, Hebrew University Law School and Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Maryland).

<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218585.pdf>

¹ Copies of the futures papers may be accessed on line at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/events/policing-research-workshop/>

This paper dealt with recent strategic innovations in policing, their impacts, and their potential meaning for the future of law enforcement. These included Community Policing, Broken Windows Policing, Problem-oriented Policing, Pulling Levers Policing, Third Party Policing, Hot Spots Policing, Compstat, and Evidence-based Policing.

In a luncheon presentation on day one of the workshop, participants heard from Prof. John Klofas of the Rochester Institute of Technology's Department of Criminal Justice, on the subject of the application of the concept of "action research" in the field of policing, in which partnerships between police departments and researchers can facilitate effective strategic problem-solving to increase safety and security in their communities.

A Policing Research Agenda for the Future: Highlights of the Workshop Discussion

On the second day of the workshop, participants turned to their main charge: To identify future policing research needs for the NIJ's consideration in shaping a research agenda for the next five to ten years, building on the previous day's work. That discussion proceeded in a free-flowing manner and produced a wide range of insightful comments and observations on the efficacy of research in the field of policing.

Over the course of their discussions, workshop participants identified a number of specific contemporary and emerging topical issues in the field of policing that they said would benefit from study. These topics included:

- Police officer recruitment and retention
- Entry-level police officer training
- Leadership training for first-line supervisors
- Police management styles
- Early intervention strategies for changing problem-officers' behavior
- The impact of prisoner reentry
- Data-mining in support of homeland security initiatives, including state intelligence gathering fusion centers
- The role of federal law enforcement in policing
- The internal dynamics of police organizations
- Implementation of the Compstat concept
- Immigration law enforcement
- The impact of technology on policing
- Nightclub entertainment enforcement-related problems
- Transnational crime, such as criminal activity involving the Russian Mafia
- Women in policing
- Cultural changes in policing

In addition, the discussion also focused on the presentation and dissemination of research findings and the relevance and usefulness of information produced by policing research to practitioners in the field. Three key questions emerged from this discussion:

- How, in what format, and to whom do we disseminate research findings so that this information is usable to, and, in the end, used by practitioners?
- What more can be done to tease information from what we learn from research to guide police officials' decisions about which strategies to pursue and how to go about implementing them?
- How do we get to the point where we can develop performance measurement systems so that we can assess the quality and effectiveness of policing?

Participants contrasted research that results in findings which police officials may find “good to know” with research that produces information that police “need to know” and that is “practical” and produces actionable results. They suggested that, owing to funding constraints, policing research should be concentrated on producing information that will help inform police officials' decisions regarding selecting and implementing strategies to address the challenges that they face.

However, participants noted that a major impediment to arriving at such conclusive findings regarding the quality and effectiveness of the police and policing strategies, is the lack of the baseline information on policing activities that is needed to develop performance measures systems. Participants observed that without this baseline, measurement cannot be developed for assessing officer behavior and performance; evaluating police recruitment and training practices; or gauging the efficacy of operational strategies and techniques.

Consensus emerged among workshop participants that the possibility of undertaking a large-scale multi-year “life-course” research initiative should be pursued to produce the baseline information needed as a starting point for developing policing performance measures. This initiative also could be used as a platform for multiple studies to assess the impact of policing practices and techniques and test innovative strategies. Participants admitted that it not only would take several years for this initiative to bear fruit, but likely would take some five to 10 years to put in place. In the meantime, efforts should be made to secure funding to pilot the concept and build support for carrying out the larger initiative.

Several police officials argued that they have pressing needs that require more timely responses than would be possible under a large scale multi-year research initiative. Researchers agreed, but noted that once put in place, the baseline created under the initiative would provide a platform that could be used to meet both longer-term and the more immediate information needs of practitioners. In the meantime, the body of policing research carried out to date on such topics as community policing might be revisited to see if more information might be teased out to identify, and guide police officials' implementation of, promising strategies and techniques.

Participants acknowledged from the outset that a large scale life-course research initiative would cost in the millions of dollars – substantially more than the limited resources that

are available to the NIJ. Therefore, participants recommended that NIJ seek agency partners in the public and private sectors to help support this initiative.