

Translational Criminology and Politics

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Presentation Outline

- I. Introduction**
- II. Making a Difference Movement**
- III. Challenges to Making a Difference**
- IV. Effectively Making a Difference Through Partnerships**
- V. Strategies to Help Overcome Politics and Fiscal Barriers in Making a Difference**
- VI. Conclusion**



I - Introduction

- Early applied purpose of criminology at the University of Chicago.
- 1890s – John D. Rockefeller grants to improve the slums thereby reducing labor unrest (culture conflict). Interestingly, criminology began with a social work/applied purpose.
- Subsequent 50-year focus on offender and crime’s causes (i.e., Sutherland, Merton, Cohen, Miller, and Cloward and Ohlin).
- 1970s – Shift from research on causes of crime to critique of criminal justice system and alternative reforms of diversion and deinstitutionalization.
- 1980s – Nothing works: get tough with reduced reliance on probation and parole to flat or determinant sentencing, three strikes, zero tolerance, and mass incarceration.
- 2000s – Beginning of the “making a difference” through evidence-based initiatives reflecting the broadly held belief that the criminal justice system reforms of both the 1970s and 1980s did not work.
- The presentation now turns to tracing the making a difference movement with a focus upon the role of translational criminology's partnerships and strategies for overcoming political impediments to making a difference.



II – Making a Difference Movement

- Since 2000 – numerous initiatives aimed at elevating research evidence’s role in policy and practice (i.e., American Society of Criminology’s (ASC) establishment of the journal *Criminology and Public Policy* and Congressional Briefings, Policy Consortium of ASC, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS), and the Association of Doctoral Programs in Criminology and Criminal Justice (ADPCJS)).
- Yet, important questions remain with conflicting perspectives held by individual criminologists.
- Fundamental question: What is the role of causality versus best available research evidence in policy and practice (Tittle 2004, Wellford 2009, Mears 2013, Blomberg et al., 2013)?
- What has emerged among many criminologists is the broad acceptance that both functions can and should be embraced simultaneously for longer- and shorter-term benefits to criminology as a science and applied criminal justice policy and practice.
- Regarding the use of best available research in policy and practice the goal is to target the problem in order to provide (1) direct intervention and (2) more effective amelioration of the alterable conditions known to be associated with the problem rather than elimination of the problem’s undetermined causes.



II – Making a Difference Movement Cont.

- An example of direct intervention and targeting the problem's associated conditions is increasing educational achievement among incarcerated delinquent youth.
- While no direct causal relationship has been established between educational achievement during incarceration and post-release recidivism, best available research documents that incarcerated delinquent youth who experience disproportionate educational achievement are more likely to return to school following release and, if they remain in school, their likelihood of recidivism is substantially reduced.
- Employing best available research to juvenile justice education policy and practice that increases the likelihood of educational achievement for incarcerated delinquents is clearly preferable to waiting until causal certainty is established on educational achievement and recidivism reductions.
- Importantly, however, as a growing number of criminologists work to share their research on various crime and justice policy and practice questions – there are significant challenges that extend beyond questions of causality.



III – Challenges to Making a Difference

- Role of politics and fiscal barriers in making a difference efforts was illustrated in the theme for the November 2021 annual meeting of the ASC: “Science and Evidence-based Policy in a Fractured Era.”
- Researchers need to recognize and anticipate how politics and fiscal constraints can shape and/or influence how research will or will not be used in the policy and practice process and consider proactive steps that can help reduce their influence.

III – Challenges to Making a Difference Cont.



An example of effectiveness in making a difference through research derailed by politics and fiscal barriers:

- From 1998 to 2010, I served as Principal Investigator for the Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEPP).
- JJEPP developed in response to a 1983 class-action lawsuit on behalf of a 14-year-old Florida boy known as Bobby M. and three other children.
- The lawsuit's resulting consent decree required Florida to provide incarcerated delinquent youth special, vocational, and alternative educational services equivalent to or better than those in public schools including the implementation of a quality assurance system for juvenile justice schools.
- Responsibility for complying with the Bobby M. consent decree was shared by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) and the Florida Department of Education (FDOE).
- FDOE and FDJJ selected Florida State University's College of Criminology and Criminal Justice to implement Florida's quality assurance system, namely JJEPP.
- JJEPP operated with 4 interrelated functions for Florida's residential, day treatment, and detention education programs (i.e., quality assurance, technical assistance, research, and policy) all of which were aimed at continuous research-based quality improvement.



III – Challenges to Making a Difference Cont.

- During its 12 years of operations, JJEEP became recognized as an exemplary program with the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and provided funding to FSU to assist other states in implementing research-based education services for incarcerated delinquents.
- Yet, and despite its demonstrated success over 12 years, in 2010 the Florida legislature ended JJEEP and returned to its pre-Bobby M. juvenile justice education practices, namely no QA, TA, or research-based policy and practice.
- In response to state budget short falls from the 2008 financial crisis, and the simultaneous national high stakes testing on student achievement in public schools – Florida chose to focus on students in public schools thereby leaving behind incarcerated delinquents.
- The question is – what can researchers do in their efforts to make a difference to more effectively respond to these political and fiscal barriers?



IV – Making a Difference Through Researcher and Policymaker/Practitioner Partnerships

- Researcher and policymaker/practitioner partnerships involve collaborative efforts to conceptualize, plan, and implement rigorous research and evaluations that directly inform policy and practice.
- NIJ funded several studies to identify some of the salient characteristics of these partnerships and subsequently funded 29 partnership projects across the country.
- Among the salient characteristics of effective partnerships included: open communication, collaboration and planning, implementation and evaluation culminating in reciprocity and exchange.
- Researcher and policymaker/practitioner partnerships are emerging as a “best practice” for the making a difference movement.
- 4 FSU Partnership Examples



IV – Making a Difference Through Researcher and Policymaker/Practitioner Partnerships Cont.

Example 1: Palm Beach County, Florida and FSU

- 25-year history.
- Conducted numerous studies (i.e., weed & seed, youth violence, jail forecasting, drug court) with three major studies currently underway (i.e., DUI homicide survivor services, school delinquency and safety intervention, pre-trial risk assessment instrument validation).
- Through the ongoing partnership, Palm Beach County has built infrastructure for institutionalized research-driven criminal justice policy and practice.
- We continue to build and expand our partnership with collaborative planning between Palm Beach County's criminal justice system and FSU through a formalized memorandum of understanding (MOU).
- It is important to note that the partnership has not always gone smoothly with some political obstacles encountered.
- These obstacles were addressed through open communication between FSU and Palm Beach County with ultimate resolution.



IV – Making a Difference Through Researcher and Policymaker/Practitioner Partnerships Cont.

Example 2: Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) and FSU

- 2012 Funded by NIJ.
- Developed a cohort of 250,000 inmates released from Florida prisons between 2004 and 2011.
- Conducted three major recidivism studies employing the 250,000-inmate cohort, namely the employment and recidivism outcomes of substance abuse treatment, work-based programs, and post-release supervision.
- Resulted in numerous policy and practice changes (i.e., substance abuse treatment close to release, expanded work release programs, and plans to increase post release supervision).
- The partnership currently continues with several projects.
- Again, as in the case with Palm Beach county, our partnership with FDC has undergone adjustments with leadership and political changes but has continued with excellent reciprocal benefits through open communication and resolution.



IV – Making a Difference Through Researcher and Policymaker/Practitioner Partnerships Cont.

Example 3: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (FDJJ) and FSU

- 2014 Funded by NIJ.
- Conducted three research and policy studies, namely, civil citation, family visitation, and school-to-prison pipeline through school-based arrests.
- Following these three studies, civil citation was legislatively expanded, a series of steps taken to improve family visitation, and to reduce school arrests and juvenile probation officers were assigned to four major hotspot high schools in the state.
- Importantly, the FDJJ partnership has also changed (in a positive direction) over the years as a result of leadership changes and acknowledgement of reciprocal benefits through open communication.



IV – Making a Difference Through Researcher and Policymaker/Practitioner Partnerships Cont.

Example 4: Florida Senate Criminal Justice Committee and FSU

- FSU provided the Senate Criminal Justice Committee with racial/ethnic impact statements of 10 proposed criminal justice bills during the 2020 session.
- FSU used statistical forecasting methods to address trends in criminal justice laws, practices, and reforms.
- The development and inclusion of racial/ethnic impact statements in proposed criminal justice legislation represented a unique initiative, with only 4 other states requiring a similar practice.
- Upon receipt of a bill, FSU generated racial/ethnic impact statements using prior empirical literature, information from other states, and trends and forecasts using Florida data.
- Each racial/ethnic impact statement was written by a collaborative group of faculty members from FSU based upon their specific areas of expertise with Committee Senators and Staff collaboration.
- Ultimately, most bills included restrictive eligibility requirements that, according to Committee Senators, would be “dead in the water” without these requirements. Thereby impeding the proposed criminal justice bills from any potential reduction in racial disparities.
- FSU is currently working on the implementation of an annual Florida Criminal Justice Summit involving multiple stakeholders (i.e., citizens, CJS agency personnel, legislators) to build consensus upon needed evidence-based CJS reforms.



IV – Making a Difference Through Researcher and Policymaker/Practitioner Partnerships Cont.

- In sum, these four partnerships have resulted in both direct and indirect policy and practice outcomes.
- It is important to recognize that these partnerships evolve over time with potential problems arising that must be acknowledged with open discussion and give and take from both sides for ultimate resolution.
- Nonetheless, the most salient problem we have encountered has been the role of politics and fiscal barriers in reducing the potential of evidence-based criminal justice policy and practice in our making a difference efforts.



V – Strategies to Help Overcome Politics and Fiscal Barriers in Making a Difference

- As the implementation of partnerships grows in the effort to advance evidence-based criminal justice policies and practices – politics and fiscal contingencies will continue to present significant barriers.
- According to Thornburgh (2011)–former U.S. Attorney General and Governor of Pennsylvania–it is these political and fiscal factors that impede and/or derail laudable evidence-based improvements to criminal justice in which Champions can play a potential role in overcoming.
- Thornburgh argues that it is incumbent that researchers, policymakers, and practitioners work together as partners to identify and reach out to potential Champions for the evidence-based policy and practice in question (discuss Champion selection strategies).
- Regardless of how compelling a given evidence-based policy and practice may be–it can be a politically hard sell.
- Two strategies to consider when confronting expected or real political barriers include: (1) The use of public opinion research and (2) Projected fiscal costs/savings assessments (discuss examples from congressional testimony, push-to-web methodology for the real time crime center (RTCC) project).
- As we experiment with the use of Champions in confronting politics and fiscal barriers in advancing evidence-based policies and practices – we all need to share our failures as well as our successes.
- Patience will be a key in validating the role of Champions and the use of public opinion surveys and cost-benefit analyses as potential best practices in successfully advancing evidence-based criminal justice policies and practices.



V - Conclusion

- Over the past century, criminology has unevenly evolved as an applied and scientific discipline.
- However, it now appears that criminology is poised to effectively combine both purposes, thereby simultaneously advancing criminology as a science and applied discipline that makes a crime and policy difference. The next slide provides an example of the science contribution resulting from FSU's making a difference efforts through researcher and policymaker/practitioner partnerships.
- A potential best practice in this simultaneous pursuit is researcher and policymaker/practitioner partnerships involving the use of Champions in overcoming politics and fiscal barriers.



V – Conclusion Cont.

<u>Journal</u>	<u>Number of Articles</u>
<i>Justice Quarterly</i>	6
<i>Crime and Delinquency</i>	6
<i>Journal of Criminal Justice</i>	6
<i>Criminology</i>	5
<i>Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency</i>	5
<i>International Journal of Criminology and Sociology</i>	3
<i>Criminology & Public Policy</i>	2
<i>Criminal Justice Policy Review</i>	1
<i>Law and Society Review</i>	1
<i>Journal of Experimental Criminology</i>	2
<i>Justice Research and Policy</i>	2
<i>Journal of Quantitative Criminology</i>	2
<i>Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology</i>	1
<i>Journal of Offender Rehabilitation</i>	1
<i>Criminal Justice and Behavior</i>	1
<i>Criminal Justice Studies</i>	1
<i>Punishment and Society</i>	1
<i>Journal of Offender Monitoring</i>	1
<i>American Journal of Criminal Justice</i>	2
<i>Journal on Poverty Law & Policy</i>	1
<i>Crime, Law and Social Change</i>	1
TOTAL	51



V – Conclusion Cont.

- Now is a time of great promise given the unprecedented availability of data, sophisticated methods of data analyses, and very importantly, the growing recognition among researchers and policymakers/practitioners alike that we must and can work together to effectively confront crime.
- It is interesting to note that in a 2011 publication by Morris, Wooding, and Grant, the authors concluded that the time lag in health research translation into policy was 17 years.
- While we have not established the time lag in the policy and practice translation of criminological research, it could easily be as long or longer.
- However, given the more immediate policy translation of research resulting from the researcher and policymaker/practitioner partnerships, it is evident the time lag can be significantly reduced.
- In conclusion, this is an opportune time in the history of crime research and justice. While the challenges of politics and fiscal constraints will remain, the making a difference movement through researcher and policymaker/practitioner partnerships and Champions are a welcomed mandates for the future.
- We can make a difference through better navigation of political and fiscal barriers in the translation of research into evidence-based criminal justice policies and practices.
- Currently, at FSU, we are incorporating into our undergraduate and graduate curricula- courses that address translation criminology and promising methods for effectively dealing with political and fiscal barriers.
- We believe translation criminology is the future and the employment of Champions to be an emerging best practice.



Thank you