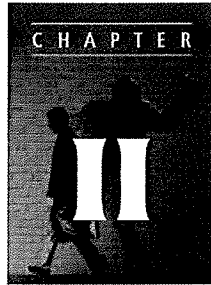


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## The Influence of Research and Evidence-Based Practices on Criminal Justice Policy

Christine L. Gardiner

**H**ow is crime policy made? How is it decided which crime prevention strategies or programs get funded? Do politicians sit around a large table discussing the most current and rigorous research on the topic? Or, do they create policy by doing what seems logical? How much do policy makers know about the correlates of crime or theories about why people commit crime? How much influence does research have on policy? Unfortunately, policy makers do not usually know as much about the causes of crime as we expect, and research does not inform policy as much as it should. While there are certainly examples of agencies, municipalities, and even states that carefully consider research when creating or changing policy—these are the exceptions rather than the rule. Thankfully, this story is changing, albeit slowly; research is now better (and there is more of it), and researchers are doing a better job disseminating it to practitioners and policy makers.

This chapter is divided into three sections and explains the context of research and its nexus to policy. The first section chronicles the evolution of criminal justice research, specifically the federal government's role in creating and disseminating criminal justice research. The second section explains what we know about crime and delinquency, including the known *risk factors* that should be taken into account when implementing policies or programs. Finally, the third section discusses the current state of knowledge on evidence-based programs and describes the resources available to practitioners, policy makers, students, and others.

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## The Commencement of Criminal Justice Research

The first efforts to produce and fund wide-scale research on criminal justice came in 1968 with the passage of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act (OCCSSA). This act established the *Law Enforcement Assistance Agency (LEAA)*, and within it the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (NILECJ). LEAA, the lead agency, provided grants to law enforcement agencies to improve public safety (most often to purchase new equipment and personnel) while NILECJ was the research center of the LEAA.

As the criminal justice research arm of the federal government, the NILECJ (since renamed the *National Institute of Justice [NIJ]*) was created to "advance scientific research, development, and evaluation to enhance the administration of justice and public safety" (Wellford, Chemers, & Schuck, 2010, p.14). It accomplishes this mandate by awarding federal grants and contracts to universities, public agencies, and private institutions engaged in research and demonstration projects that expand our knowledge of "what works" in preventing and controlling crime, and by disseminating those findings to researchers and practitioners. It may be surprising to learn that prior to the establishment of the NILECJ in 1968, there was no national agency encouraging, conducting, or disseminating criminal justice research. Research was conducted by a few small, independent agencies (such as California Institute for the Study of Crime and Delinquency, National Council on Crime and Delinquency, and the Vera Institute), but there was no unified research agenda nor concerted effort to organize or circulate the findings (Wellford et al., 2010).

This changed when Congress passed the *Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968* to provide federal monies to research criminal justice issues and to "provide more accurate information on the causes of crime and the effectiveness of various means of preventing crime" (Wellsford et al., 2010, p.27). As a result of this funding, we expanded our knowledge about crime control strategies and learned a great deal about policing practices, and a few things about prison alternatives, drug treatment programs, and other programs thought to prevent crime. Some of the well-known studies that you may be familiar with that were funded as a result of this act include: the Kansas City Preventative Patrol Experiment, the Newark and Flint Foot Patrol Experiments, as well as many other studies on police response time, neighborhood watch programs, team policing strategies, crime prevention through environmental design, fingerprinting, investigations, habitual criminals, and plea bargaining (LEAA, 1978).

Only a few of the funded studies were methodologically rigorous by today's standards. Still, this was the first time that federal grant money was made available on a wide-scale for criminal justice research, and the legislation was vitally important for the avenues of inquiry it initiated. The legislation is also highly important for having instigated the creation of criminal justice as a discipline, separate and distinct from sociology. Unfortunately, the money spent on criminal justice programs (and research) did not have any effect on the rising crime rates at the time; so much of the grant money disappeared. Some of the early programs funded by the 1968 OCCSSA are still in existence today (Barker, 2010). Incidentally, many researchers made a name for themselves on these research projects and went on to have long, successful research careers as a result.

One of the first efforts to disseminate research findings came 40 years ago with the passage of the Crime Control Act of 1973, which established NILECJ as the first clearinghouse of criminal justice information. There are now many federal agencies that fund or disseminate research (e.g., Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Community Oriented Policing Services, Office on Violence Against Women); each plays an important role in criminal justice research and policy in the United States. There are also numerous private (partisan and nonpartisan) foundations and organizations that fund, conduct, and/or disseminate criminal justice research and which have been integral in our quest to understand, control, and prevent crime and ascertain the benefits and consequences of criminal justice related policies.

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## Chapter II The Influence of Research and Evidence-Based Practices on Criminal Justice Policy

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Although the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 provided considerable federal monies to local agencies to implement new programs and conduct research, it did not *require* research of funded programs right away.<sup>1</sup> There were a few instances in which Congress required program evaluations, but for the most part these directives went unfulfilled due to budget and resource constraints (Sherman et al., 1997). More recently in 1996, Congress mandated that crime prevention programs funded by the federal government be evaluated for effectiveness. It stipulated that the evaluations be "independent," "employ rigorous and scientifically recognized standards and methodologies," and focus on the correlates of juvenile crime and the effectiveness of the programs to address known correlates (Sherman et al., 1997). As a result of this mandate, University of Maryland scholars, led by Lawrence Sherman, were commissioned by the National Institute of Justice in 1996 to conduct an independent review of the 500+ program evaluations that constituted the relevant scientific literature at the time. This was a "state of the science report on what [was] known—and what [was] not—about the effectiveness of local crime prevention programs and practices" (Sherman et al., 1997, p. 1–1).

The report examined more than 500 studies of crime prevention programs in seven institutional settings: communities, families, schools, places, labor markets, police agencies, and other criminal justice agencies. Using established scientific standards for inferring causation, researchers placed programs into one of four classifications (what works, what doesn't, what's promising, and what's unknown) for each crime prevention category. Each study was rated on rigor of scientific methods and program effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 was the lowest, 5 was the highest, 3 was considered "moderately strong").

Of the 500+ studies evaluated, 14 programs had at least two moderately strong studies (scientific methods score of 3 or higher) that demonstrated program effectiveness and received the "what works" label; 23 programs had at least two moderately strong studies that demonstrated program ineffectiveness, and were classified in the "what doesn't work" category; and 30 programs were catalogued as "promising" because they had at least one moderately strong research study that suggested the program was effective. All other programs were classified as "what's unknown" (Sherman et al., 1997). See Table 2.1 for a list of programs in each classification.

**Table 2.1 University of Maryland Report: What Works, What's Promising, and What Doesn't Work**

| What Works                                                                 |                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Home visiting programs for moms                                            | Preschool with home visits by teacher                             |
| Teaching competency skills in schools                                      | Family therapy & parent training                                  |
| Coaching high-risk youth in thinking skills                                | Vocational training for male ex-offenders                         |
| Schools that communicate & reinforce clear, consistent norms               | Therapeutic community treatment for substance users in prison     |
| Nuisance abatement action on landlords of rental housing with drug dealing | On-scene arrests for domestic abusers                             |
| Rehabilitation programs with risk-focused treatment                        | Monitoring high-risk repeat offenders by specialized police units |
| Incarcerating high-risk repeat offenders                                   | Extra police patrols in high crime hotspots                       |

(Continued)

<sup>1</sup> In 1972, the law was amended to require evaluations of programs funded by local assistance grants (Sherman et al., 1997).

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Table 2.1 (Continued)

| What's Promising                                                                        |                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improved classroom management & instructional techniques                                | "Thinking skills" training for high-risk youth                                              |
| Community-based mentoring by Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America                        | Community-based after-school recreation programs                                            |
| Gang member monitoring by community members, police, probation                          | Job Corps residential training programs for at-risk youth                                   |
| "Schools within schools" that group students into smaller units                         | Building school capacity through organizational development                                 |
| Community policing with meetings to set priorities                                      | Police showing greater respect to arrested offenders                                        |
| Polite field interrogations of suspicious persons                                       | Higher numbers of police officers                                                           |
| Mailing arrest warrants to domestic violence suspects who leave before police arrive    | Proactive drunk driving arrests with breath testing                                         |
| Battered women's shelters                                                               | Enterprise zones                                                                            |
| Two store clerks in already-robbed convenience stores                                   | Improved training & management of bar staff                                                 |
| Redesigned layout of retail stores                                                      | Metal detectors                                                                             |
| Street closures, barricades, & rerouting                                                | Target hardening                                                                            |
| Problem solving analysis unique to the crime situation                                  | Proactive arrests for carrying concealed weapons                                            |
| Drug courts                                                                             | Fines for criminal acts                                                                     |
| Drug treatment in jails followed by urine testing in the community                      | Intensive supervision and aftercare of juvenile offenders                                   |
| Prison-based vocational education programs for adult inmates                            | Moving urban public housing residents to suburban homes                                     |
| What Doesn't Work                                                                       |                                                                                             |
| Gun buy-back programs                                                                   | Arrests of juveniles for minor offenses                                                     |
| Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)                                              | Drug prevention classes focused on fear or self-esteem                                      |
| School-based, leisure-time enrichment programs                                          | Counseling and peer counseling of students in schools                                       |
| Short-term, nonresidential training programs for at-risk youth                          | Summer jobs or subsidized work programs for at-risk youth                                   |
| Diversion from court to job training as a condition of case management                  | Community mobilization against crime in high-crime poverty areas                            |
| Police organized neighborhood watch programs                                            | Police newsletter with local crime information                                              |
| Police counseling visits to couples' days after a domestic violence incident            | Arrests of unemployed suspects for domestic assault                                         |
| Increased arrests or raids on drug markets                                              | Storefront police offices                                                                   |
| Correctional boot camps using traditional military basic training                       | "Scared Straight" programs in which juveniles visit adult programs                          |
| Shock probation, shock parole, and split sentences adding jail time to probation/parole | Residential programs for juvenile offenders using challenging experiences in rural settings |

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Table 2.1 (Continued)

| What Doesn't Work                                            |                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Rehabilitation programs using vague, unstructured counseling | Intensive supervision parole or probation (ISP) |
| Home detention with electronic monitoring                    |                                                 |

Source: Adapted from Sherman, Gottfredson, MacKenzie, Eck, Reuter, & Bushway (1998).

This report was a first of its kind in the criminal justice arena and sparked a new interest in summative studies. Unfortunately, however, the authors concluded that the "number and strength of available evaluations [was] insufficient for providing adequate guidance to the national effort to reduce serious crime" (Sherman et al., 1997, p. vi); and further, limited funding did not allow "the nation to learn *why* some innovations work[ed], exactly *what* was done, and *how* [programs/practices could] be successfully adapted in other cities" (emphasis in original, p. xi). In other words, we needed better (more scientifically rigorous) studies that could adequately guide replication efforts. Unfortunately, federal money invested in criminal justice research continues to lag far behind money invested in research on other social issues. On a brighter note, the federal grant money devoted to criminal justice research has improved over time, and research on crime prevention programs has significantly advanced since this 1997 report. Our commitment to research has evolved to the point where federal grant seekers are now required to incorporate best practices as well as methodologically rigorous evaluations of the proposed programs into their applications for funding.

### What We Know About Crime and Delinquency That Policy Should Consider

Research has taught us some important "facts" about crime and delinquency that should be taken into account when developing criminal justice responses and policy. To begin, *crime is disproportionately committed by young people, specifically adolescents and young adults*. Self-report studies reveal that more than 90% of juveniles admit to committing some minor delinquency (Agnew & Brezina, 2012; Regoli, Hewitt, & DeLisi, 2011). While many people engage in minor delinquency during their youth, the vast majority of people desist by their early to mid-20s (on their own, without any criminal justice intervention) (Shader, 2003). Many scholars theorize why antisocial behavior peaks during adolescence and propose that it may result from individual characteristics (such as a latent trait or biological vulnerabilities), social and environmental experiences, and/or other significant changes during the life course (graduation, marriage, birth of a child). Recent brain imaging research that indicates that the brain is not fully developed until early adulthood is also part of the explanation.

While persons who dabble in illegal behaviors during their youth account for the bulk of delinquents, they do not commit the majority of crimes. *A small percent of individuals, sometimes called career criminals, commit a large proportion of crimes*. So, while a lot of people commit a little crime for a short period of time, a small number of individuals start their "criminal careers" early, and continue to offend at a high rate for a long period of time (decades or more); the former are referred to as low-rate, minor, or *adolescent-limited offenders* while the latter are referred to as high-rate, serious, chronic, or *life-course-persistent offenders* (Moffitt, 1993). Another fact is that *males commit more crime and delinquency than females*. Approximately 70% of juveniles arrested are male, while approximately 30%

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are female (this gap used to be much larger) (Chesney-Lind, Morash, & Stevens, 2008). Although both genders commit a broad array of crimes, males commit more serious delinquency than females and females commit more larceny/theft offenses than males (Agnew & Brezina, 2012; Shader (OJJDP), 2006).

There are also some crime differences by race and class. Specifically, some research indicates that the rate of involvement in minor crime is consistent between juveniles of different races and social classes, but African American and lower class youths are more likely to engage in serious delinquency. This correlation exists because there are more high-rate offenders in lower class communities than in middle class communities and more high-rate offenders of African American descent than any other race (Agnew & Brezina, 2012). The question is: why?

We now know that some people are at greater risk of becoming delinquent than others—these individuals often have certain traits or life circumstances in common. These traits, which increase the risk of a person committing delinquent/criminal acts, are known as *risk factors* and include biological and psychological risk factors, family risk factors, social risk factors (e.g., the schools they attend, or their peer associates), and environmental risk factors (their residential community). It is also believed that there are some traits, known as *protective factors*, which decrease the likelihood of delinquency. Each of these contributes to an individual's risk profile and is discussed below.<sup>2</sup>

Risk factors are often clustered in people and places. Life-course-persistent offenders tend to have the most risk factors, but there is not a single "key" risk factor that means someone is going to be a criminal. Rather, it is the accumulation of risk factors that increases the *likelihood* of a person engaging in antisocial/criminal behavior. Similarly, neighborhoods of *concentrated disadvantage* can "activate" risk factors that might remain dormant if the child lived in a middle-class neighborhood (possibly due to the increased presence of delinquent peers and/or opportunities for crime in disadvantaged communities) (Wikström & Loeber, 2000).

### Biological and Psychological Risk Factors

The nature-nurture debate has captivated humans for hundreds of years. Scientists have learned that while half of the variance in antisocial behavior is influenced by genes (nature), environment (nurture) can and does play an important role in determining whether, and to what degree, a person engages in antisocial behaviors (Moffitt, Ross, & Raine, 2011). For example, the MAOA gene, which is associated with moderating the effect of childhood maltreatment on violence, is affected by environmental factors. Thus, two people who have the MAOA gene and have experienced childhood maltreatment may be more (or less) affected by the childhood maltreatment based on how the MAOA gene interacts with environmental and other factors unique to the person and his or her life (Moffitt et al., 2011).

We know that many antisocial individuals are *chronically underaroused* (as indicated by low resting heart rate, slow EEG, and minimal sweating). There is also strong evidence that *impaired communication between the frontal lobes of the brain* (which regulate self-control) *and the temporal lobes of the brain* (which regulate emotions) can result in higher risk-seeking behavior and criminality (Moffitt et al., 2011). This finding is consistent with, and helps explain, the elevated offending levels found in youth around the globe, and the standard decline in offending during early adulthood (once the brain is fully

<sup>2</sup> This chapter only addresses the correlates of delinquency because other chapters in this volume concentrate on other important rehabilitation and crime prevention strategies and policies. For example, see Chapter 19 to learn about correctional rehabilitation programs, Chapter 4 for policing strategies, Chapter 8 for substance abuse prevention, and Chapter 9 for sex offender programs.

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developed). Other consistent individual risk factors that have a biological basis are *low intelligence* (verbal IQ), *lack of empathy* (the ability to understand and relate to another person's thoughts/feelings), and *irritability* (having a heightened sensitivity to stressors, a tendency to overreact and blame others for personal misfortune, and exhibiting overtly antagonistic behavior).

People who are considered chronic, life-course-persistent offenders tend to have multiple "biological vulnerabilities" (risk factors).<sup>1</sup> These biological vulnerabilities affect people living in criminogenic environments more powerfully than they affect people living in stable, healthy environments. Some of these biological influences can be counteracted through proper nutrition, healthy living, and the presence of protective factors. One important note: biological influences *predispose* a person to antisocial behavior; they do not predetermine who will or will not be antisocial or criminal (just as a near-sighted mother predisposes her children to poor vision).

What should we do with this knowledge? Does this evidence mean that criminals are born, and therefore not responsible for their actions? Should criminals with specific genes be sentenced less severely than criminals without these same genes? Should all people get tested to ascertain whether they have any "criminal genes"? This information has significant implications for criminal justice policy.

As importantly, what does research mean for crime prevention policies? The evidence that biological vulnerabilities can be switched on/off (or at least turned up/down) by the environment tells us that money spent to create and/or expand healthy environments (families, schools, communities) is likely to decrease criminality, especially in communities that experience concentrated disadvantage. At the very least, programs and policies that help women (from all socioeconomic backgrounds and health-care insurance statuses) have healthy pregnancies, that allow children and adolescents to obtain proper nutrition and to grow up in toxin-free neighborhoods, and that decrease the number and severity of traumatic brain injuries should be incorporated into our national criminal justice policy agenda because they help prevent delinquency, along with a host of other issues (cancer, obesity, and suicide, for example).

### Family Risk Factors

Crime is concentrated in families; in other words, a small percentage of families account for a large proportion of offenders (Farrington, Barnes, & Lambert, 1996; Loeber & Southamer-Loeber, 1986). There are several possible reasons for this observation. First, it is possible that parents pass on criminogenic predispositions through shared genes that incline their offspring to antisocial behavior. Second, parents may role-model antisocial behavior and thought processes. Third, parents and children may be exposed to similar, multiple risk factors across generations that repeat and increase the likelihood of offending (such as poverty, abuse, or teenage parenthood). Finally, antisocial parents may be ineffective parents and raise antisocial children. Having *antisocial parents* (picture drug users, alcoholics, and individuals engaged in other antisocial or criminal behavior) is one of many major risk factors for delinquency; *large family size*, *poor child rearing methods*, and *high conflict homes* are others.

Research consistently confirms that having a *large number of siblings* is correlated with delinquency. Although researchers are still debating the reasons for this correlation, a favorite among academics is that

<sup>1</sup> This is a common pattern and one that is repeated in both family and community risk factors.

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the amount of parental supervision each child receives decreases as the number of children in a family increases, and supervision is tightly tied to delinquency. It is also held that families with many children may be highly stressful environments due to resource strain and personal space challenges (overcrowding). West and Farrington (1973) found that families that were less crowded (had more rooms than children) had fewer delinquent children.

*Poor child rearing methods* is another major family risk factor for delinquency. Specifically, parents who use *harsh and/or erratic discipline, do not properly supervise their children, do not have a warm relationship with their children, and/or are not involved in their children's lives* are more likely to raise delinquent children. The most important aspect of child rearing from a delinquency prevention standpoint is parental supervision, as it is the risk factor that most strongly and consistently predicts future offending. Researchers found that juveniles are twice as likely to offend if their parent(s) do not conscientiously and consistently monitor their activities (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). Likewise, physical punishment of elementary school age and older children (not spanking toddlers), predicts later offending as does unpredictable and inconsistent discipline. While cold and rejecting parents increase the likelihood of delinquency, warm and caring parents decrease the amount of offending and may serve as a protective factor against the effects of harsh discipline (Farrington & Welsh, 2007). For example, McCord (1997) found that boys with a cold, physically punishing mother were 2.5 times more likely to be convicted of delinquency than boys with a warm, physically punishing mother (she noted a similar effect for fathers). Although most physically abused or neglected children do not go on to become delinquents, they are more likely to become offenders than are children who were not physically abused or neglected (Maxfield & Widom, 1996).

The quality of home life is also very important, as *high conflict families* produce more than their representative share of delinquents. It is often popular to blame "broken homes" for delinquency; the truth is that the amount of conflict within the family unit is much more important than the number of "parents" who reside in the house (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; McCord, 1982). According to research, the best parenting style is authoritative, which is a style that is both warm and firm (also defined as "firm but fair").

Given these findings, policy should focus on funding cost-effective programs that improve parenting practices. Also, while it would be unethical to dictate how many children a family may have, policy could be used to ensure that all families (large families included) have access to the necessary resources (adequate child care, appropriate housing, proper nutrition, etc.) to ensure the healthiest childhood and family situation possible.

### Social Risk Factors

The main social risk factor for delinquency is having *delinquent friends*. Unlike adults who offend alone, juveniles tend to co-offend in small groups (usually 2–3 youth). For most youth, this means shoplifting, vandalizing property, or being involved in a schoolyard fight. However, for some it can include much more serious crimes, such as robbery, carjacking, or homicide. In particular, youth who are gang members commit a lot more crimes and more serious crimes than do juveniles who are not in a gang. Further, there is a large increase in a person's pattern of offending while the person is active in a gang, and a large decrease in offending after he or she leaves the gang. Only a small percent of youth join gangs (between 6% and 30%), but those in gangs commit a disproportionate amount of crime, especially violent crimes (Maxson, 2011).

This means that gangs are a ripe target for policy intervention. If we can decrease the number of juveniles who join gangs, or reduce the amount of time they spend in a gang, we can reduce crime,

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particularly violent crime. Unfortunately, as research demonstrates, successful gang prevention and intervention programs and policies have been particularly difficult to achieve.<sup>4</sup>

Schools are also correlated with delinquency; however, it is usually through factors that may not be easily influenced by school administrators, staff, or faculty. For example, the *rate of delinquents who attend a school* increases the likelihood of others engaging in crime. *Dropping out of school* is also a school-related risk factor, as are behaviors like *habitual tardiness*, *school misbehavior*, *low attachment to school*, *poor relations with teachers*, *little school involvement*, and *having low educational/occupational goals* (Agnew & Brezina, 2012). Research suggests that schools with lower than expected delinquency rates have some characteristics in common—these characteristics might be thought of as protective factors. For example, they have *clear rules that are consistently enforced*, have *high expectations for students*, *praise student achievement* and *offer opportunities for school success*, have *strong community involvement* and *adequate resources*, and are *pleasant places to learn* (Agnew & Brezina, 2012).

These findings suggest that school policies that encourage or incentivize administrators and faculty to identify and intervene with students recognized as chronically truant and at-risk for dropping out could have a significant impact on delinquency (as well as on students' self-efficacy and future lifetime achievements). Also, providing a variety of opportunities and funding for students to participate in extracurricular activities (such as sports, drama, music, art, and academic programs) allows students to develop competencies in those areas as well as increasing connections to the school and their prosocial peers. Finally, policies also should focus on creating school environments that have been shown to reduce delinquency rates.

### Environmental Risk Factors

There is considerable research evidence that validates the negative effects that *concentrated disadvantage* has on both children and adults. Concentrated disadvantage is a term used to describe ethnic minority communities that have high rates of poverty, unemployment, and family disruption. The neighborhoods themselves frequently (though not always) have high crime rates with a high proportion of probationers and parolees as residents. Among other things, children who grow up in these communities are at risk for delinquency/criminality, teenage parenthood, child neglect and maltreatment, and school failure (Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002).

Not all poor, minority neighborhoods have high rates of crime and criminal justice intervention, however. Some neighborhoods, those with high levels of *collective efficacy* (high residential stability combined with high connectivity [mutual trust] between residents, and high levels of informal social control), have low crime rates.<sup>5</sup> For example, research finds that the delinquency rate of a neighborhood is correlated with the neighborhood's ability to maintain social control, the proportion of residents engaged in "neighboring activities" (borrowing items, helping one another, having lunch, etc.), and the level of organizational participation (belonging to organizations with other community members) in the neighborhood (Sampson, 2011).

Communities represent a key opportunity to focus comprehensive prevention programs on a large group of at-risk individuals at a single time. Though some of these neighborhoods pose numerous and

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 11 for a more thorough discussion of gang prevention and intervention programs.

<sup>5</sup> Collective efficacy can be equated to a protective factor.

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significant challenges, there is a strong financial incentive to change the way we approach high crime and high criminal justice expenditure communities ("million dollar blocks"). These neighborhoods are very costly—both in terms of current criminal justice related costs (police, courts, probation, parole, incarceration, and loss to victims), other social costs (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), welfare, etc.), but also future lost productivity, wages, and tax earnings.

Research suggests that, to prevent crime, policy should attempt to create and foster collective efficacy and informal social control in neighborhoods, especially in those communities that are at a tipping point. Sampson (2011) contends that increasing positive connections between youth and adults in the community is the key to accomplishing this collective efficacy. Additionally, reducing social and physical disorder (e.g., broken windows, trash, panhandlers, graffiti, and prostitution) is important, as these have been shown to increase fear of crime (Skogan, 1990), possibly serious crime, and may influence neighborhood sustainability by inciting law-abiding people and businesses to move out of the area (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999). Of course, the ultimate answer is to increase human capital interventions for children in these neighborhoods in order to decrease the individual and family-level risk factors that are more often found in children living in concentrated disadvantage. A view confirmed by Wikström and Loeber (2000) who found that boys with balanced risk/protective scores or high protective scores only became delinquent when living in disadvantaged public housing areas (in comparison to boys with high risk scores who became delinquent regardless of where they lived).

### Current State of Knowledge

Just as research about delinquency has exploded over the past forty years, so has research on effective prevention programs. Before declaring which prevention strategies and programs are the most effective, it is useful for students to understand that prevention programs are categorized by the general target population. While definitions vary slightly by definer, there are typically three levels of prevention/intervention: universal (primary), selective (secondary), and indicated (tertiary). **Universal prevention programs** (also referred to as primary prevention) *target an entire population without discerning which individuals are at elevated risk*. Public service messages and general education programs/seminars are examples. For instance, the now-infamous drug prevention commercial from the 1980s of an egg being cracked into a frying pan with a commentator stating "This is your brain—and this is your brain on drugs;" antiplagiarism posters hung throughout a college campus; a bullying prevention program given to all third graders in an elementary school; and a parenting seminar offered by a local community group to all parents in a low-crime neighborhood are good examples of universal prevention efforts. Universal prevention programs are not highly effective, but they are generally very cost effective and often relatively easy to administer.

**Selective (or secondary) prevention programs** *target those at elevated risk for anti-social behavior or delinquency*. Individuals are identified by their risk profiles (the number and nature of risk factors in comparison to the number and nature of protective factors). Those with elevated risk profiles (for a specific behavior, such as gang joining, school dropout, or substance abuse) are targeted for participation in programs intended to discourage the unwanted behavior. A gang prevention program for youth in a gang neighborhood, a preschool program for low-income children, a home visiting program for young at-risk moms, and high school graduation incentives for dropouts and teen parents are all examples of selective prevention programs. Some scholars and practitioners also include early intervention programs for youth caught committing minor crimes, or status offenses in this category. For example, in an effort to curb

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unwanted behavior before it escalates into something more serious, a youth caught smoking might be allowed (encouraged) to participate in a tobacco information program in lieu of being petitioned in court. The costs of programs in this category vary tremendously, with some very cost effective (i.e., education classes or graduation incentives) and others very expensive (home visiting programs for at-risk moms for example). Regardless of the cost-per-participant, prevention programs in this category are usually more effective than primary prevention programs.

Finally, *indicated (or tertiary) prevention programs are intervention programs for those already engaged in repeated or serious delinquency.* Here, the targeted population is usually identified by school administrators, police officers, or court personnel. These programs may take place in the community or within a correctional setting. Examples of indicated programs include: multisystemic therapy, functional family therapy, and multidimensional treatment foster care. These are typically the most expensive programs to administer because the programs are usually multifaceted and intensive, address multiple risk factors and social units associated with each involved youth, and are rather lengthy (in comparison to selective programs).

### What Works

So, what programs/policies are endorsed by research? While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to detail every crime prevention/intervention program shown to be effective;<sup>6</sup> in general, there is significant research support that the following strategies reduce delinquency (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Greenwood & Turner, 2011):<sup>7,8</sup>

- *Academic skills enhancement*—one-on-one and group tutoring sessions to improve subject mastery or passing the GED equivalency exam
- *Behavioral programs*—teaching school-age children appropriate behavior by rewarding selected behaviors
- *Case management*—case manager provides services and connects youth and his or her family to other needed resources
- *Community-based mentoring*—prosocial volunteers spend time with and mentor at-risk children and youth
- *Counseling*—individual, family, and group counseling
- *Cognitive behavioral therapy*—method of teaching/counseling that involves challenging a person's thought processes or behavior, modeling new thoughts and behaviors, and practicing new thinking and behavior
- *Home visiting programs for young moms*—prevention program administered by health or social work professionals in the home; aimed at improving prenatal care and parenting skills of at-risk mothers
- *Parent management training programs*—teaching parents good parenting skills; programs use a variety of methods

<sup>6</sup> A list of 442 federal and privately rated programs is available at: <http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/resources.php>.

<sup>7</sup> This list is restricted to delinquency prevention programs because other chapters in this volume comprehensively address other relevant crime prevention programs and policy choices.

<sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise stated, programs may be for prevention or intervention purposes.

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- *Preschool enrichment for low income 3- and 4-year-olds*—prevention; high quality education for at-risk children; one goal is to improve school readiness
- *Restorative justice for low-risk offenders*—intervention for youth who commit minor offenses; involves victim-offender mediation and restitution (mediation only and restitution only are also effective)
- *Social skills training*—teaching school-age children appropriate social behavior; programs use a variety of methods
- *Teen court*—intervention for juveniles who commit minor offenses; court process and sentence administered by peers

In addition to the proven *strategies* above, Blueprints, a project of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV), University of Colorado Boulder, identified several specific proven *programs*, which are listed in Table 2.2 below. Programs are essentially name-brand strategies. Whereas strategies are a general technique or practice; programs are an entire “package” that includes curriculum and course materials for a specified population, training for program facilitators, specific instructions for course delivery and dosage, as well as other program and facilitator requirements.

**Table 2.2 Blueprints Model and Promising Programs (as of 2/2013)**

| Name                                                                   | Description <sup>1</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Model Programs</b>                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS) | BASICS is a brief motivational intervention designed to reduce heavy drinking and its adverse consequences among high-risk college students by enhancing motivation to change, promoting healthier choices, providing accurate information about alcohol, and teaching coping skills for harm reduction.                                                                                                                                                 |
| Functional Family Therapy (FFT)                                        | FFT is a family therapy intervention designed to assess family behaviors that maintain delinquent behavior, modify dysfunctional family communication, train family members to negotiate effectively, set clear rules about privileges and responsibilities, and generalize changes to community contexts and relationships.                                                                                                                             |
| LifeSkills Training (LST)                                              | LST is a 3-year middle school classroom curriculum to prevent adolescent tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use. LST also targets reduction of violence and other risk behaviors. Program components teach students personal self-management skills, social skills, and drug information and resistance skills.                                                                                                                                             |
| Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)                          | MTFC maintains chronic delinquents in alternative family homes in the community with the ultimate goals of reuniting the families, reducing delinquent behavior, and increasing participation in prosocial activities. The program promotes the use of close supervision, fair and consistent limits, predictable consequences for rule breaking, a supportive relationship with at least one mentoring adult, and reduced exposure to delinquent peers. |

<sup>1</sup> All descriptions are directly quoted from the Blueprints website (<http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/allPrograms.php>)

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**Table 2.2 (Continued)**

| Name                                                     | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Multisystemic Therapy (MST)                              | MST provides intensive family therapy with the goal to improve the real-world functioning of youth by changing their natural settings—home, school, and neighborhood—in ways that promote prosocial behavior while decreasing antisocial behavior.                                                                                                                               |
| Nurse-Family Partnerships (NFP)                          | NFP utilizes nurses to work with first-time pregnant mothers in their homes to: 1) improve maternal and fetal health during pregnancy; 2) improve the health and development of the child by helping parents to become more competent caregivers; and 3) enhance parents' personal development by helping them plan future pregnancies, continue their education, and find work. |
| Project Toward No Drug Abuse (TND)                       | Project Toward No Drug Abuse (TND) is a high school prevention curriculum taught by teachers designed to prevent cigarette, alcohol, marijuana, and hard drug use.                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)        | PATHS strives to reduce aggression and behavior problems by promoting the development of social and emotional competencies in children during the elementary school age years.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Promising Programs</b>                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Adolescent Coping with Depression                        | A therapeutic group intervention that seeks to reduce and prevent major depression or dysthymia among adolescents.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Athletes Training and Learning to Avoid Steroids (ATLAS) | ATLAS is a drug prevention and health promotion program that deters substance use among high school adolescents in school-sponsored athletics by educating youth on the harms of anabolic steroids, alcohol, and other drug use, and by promoting sports nutrition and exercise.                                                                                                 |
| Be Proud! Be Responsible!                                | The program goal is to reduce risky sexual behavior (unprotected sex) leading to potential HIV/STD contraction among adolescents. It aims to teach new skills and provide information to reach these goals. This is usually accomplished through one or more 2- to 8-hour sessions.                                                                                              |
| Behavioral Monitoring and Reinforcement Program          | A middle school two-year intervention that uses small group meetings designed to reduce adolescent drug abuse by enhancing the incompatible behaviors of school attendance, promptness, achievement, and discipline among high-risk adolescents.                                                                                                                                 |
| Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA)              | BBBSA is a mentoring program that works with at-risk adolescents to delay or reduce antisocial behaviors, improve academic performance, attitudes and behaviors, improve peer and family relationships, strengthen self-concept, and provide social and cultural enrichment.                                                                                                     |
| Bright Bodies                                            | The program uses nutrition education, behavior modification, and exercise to positively affect body composition, weight, blood pressure and lipid profiles, and reduce metabolic complications in ethnically diverse, overweight children.                                                                                                                                       |

(Continued)

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**Table 2.2 (Continued)**

| Name                                                            | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) | Mental health professionals provide a 10-session group intervention to reduce children's symptoms of PTSD, depression and anxiety resulting from exposure to violence. Also included are 1 to 3 individual child sessions, 2 optional parent sessions, and a teacher educational session.                                          |
| Communities That Care (CTC)                                     | Communities That Care (CTC) is a prevention system designed to reduce levels of adolescent delinquency and substance use through the selection and use of effective preventive interventions tailored to a community's specific profile of risk and protection.                                                                    |
| Coping Power                                                    | Coping Power has a parent and child focus to prevent substance abuse and reduce aggressive attitudes and behaviors among high-risk children.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Early Literacy and Learning Model                               | The Early Literacy and Learning Model is a literacy-focused curriculum and support system designed for young children from low-income families. The program is designed to enhance existing classroom curricula by specifically focusing on improving children's early literacy skills and knowledge.                              |
| Effekt                                                          | EFFEKT seeks to reduce teenage use of alcohol primarily by providing information to parents delivered through the schools.                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Familias Unidas                                                 | A family-based intervention to promote protection against, and reduce risk for behavior problems, illicit drug use, cigarette use, and unsafe sexual behavior in Hispanic youth and adolescents.                                                                                                                                   |
| Good Behavior Game (GBG)                                        | GBG is a classroom-based behavior management strategy designed to reduce individual aggressive, disruptive behavior, particularly among highly aggressive, disruptive children, and thereby create an effective classroom learning environment supportive of all children being able to learn.                                     |
| Guiding Good Choices                                            | A family competency training program to enhance parenting behaviors and skills, to enhance effective child management behaviors and parent-child interactions and bonding, to teach children skills to resist peer influence, and to reduce adolescent problem behaviors.                                                          |
| Highscope Preschool                                             | HighScope is implemented in preschools and aims to build cognitive skills and attitudes to succeed in school by increasing opportunities for active learning. In the long term, it aims to prevent adolescent delinquency and school dropout among "high risk" children, and improve their lives as adults.                        |
| Incredible Years -- Child Treatment (IY)                        | Therapists work with small groups of children in weekly sessions for 18 to 19 weeks to reduce conduct problems and enhance children's school behaviors, promote social competence and positive peer interactions, develop appropriate conflict management strategies, communicate feelings (emotional literacy), and manage anger. |

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**Table 2.2 (Continued)**

| Name                                                 | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Incredible Years – Parent (IY)                       | IY Parent has three goals: 1) to provide a cost-effective, early intervention parent program to promote young children's social, emotional, and academic competence, and prevent the development of behavior problems; 2) to provide interventions that target treating and reducing the early onset of child conduct problems; and 3) to provide parent training aimed at reducing negative and promoting positive parenting.                                                                      |
| Incredible Years – Teacher Classroom Management (IY) | The Incredible Years (IY) Teacher Classroom Management Program provides teachers with classroom management strategies to manage difficult and inappropriate child behavior problems, while also promoting social, emotional, and academic competence. The program goals aim to increase the students' motivation and joy for learning through the effective use of positive and proactive teaching techniques, positive teacher-student relationships, and supportive teacher-parent relationships. |
| InShape                                              | InShape is a brief multiple behavior program that includes a Fitness Behavior Screen, one-on-one consultation, and a one-page goal plan. The program is designed to reduce drug abuse while increasing positive mental and physical health outcomes among college students age 18 to 21.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Olweus Bullying Prevention Program                   | To reduce and prevent schools' bully/victim problems by restructuring the existing school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying behavior.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)              | PCIT, through 12 weekly, one-half hour parent-child sessions, aims to decrease child disruptive behavior and abusive parenting by improving parent-child relationships, teaching effective parenting techniques, and encouraging effective discipline.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)             | PALS main goal is to improve reading and mathematics skills of students through guided peer-assisted learning strategies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Positive Family Support-Family Check Up              | Positive Family Support-Family Check-Up is a family-based, 3-tiered intervention that targets adolescent problem behavior at the universal, selected, and indicated levels. Goals are to reduce problem behavior and risk for substance abuse and depression, improve family management practices and communication skills as well as adolescents' self-regulation skills and prosocial behaviors.                                                                                                  |
| Project Northland                                    | Provides comprehensive programming at the school, peer, parent, and community levels to reduce adolescent alcohol use, improve parent-child communication about alcohol use, increase students' self-efficacy to resist alcohol and understanding of alcohol use norms, decrease peer influences to drink, and reduce students' ease of access to alcohol in their communities.                                                                                                                     |
| Quick Reads                                          | Quick Reads is a repeated reading program designed to build fluency and comprehension by utilizing grade-level, high-frequency words that reflect appropriate phonics and syllable patterns. The program is targeted to elementary students with below-grade reading skills.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

(Continued)

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**Table 2.2 (Continued)**

| Name                                          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Raising Healthy Children                      | Raising Healthy Children is a preventive intervention with teacher, parent, and child components, designed to promote positive youth development by enhancing protective factors, reducing identified risk factors, and preventing adolescent problem behaviors and academic failure.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Safe Dates                                    | Safe Dates is a 10-session dating abuse prevention program to raise students' awareness of what constitutes healthy and abusive dating relationships, as well as the causes and consequences of dating abuse. It helps change adolescent norms about dating violence, equips students with skills and resources to develop healthy dating relationships, positive communication, anger management, and conflict resolution.                                                                            |
| Sport                                         | SPORT is a health promotion program that seeks to reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use by high school students in addition to improving their overall physical health.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Steps to Respect                              | Steps to Respect has three main goals: (1) reducing bullying and destructive bystander behaviors; (2) increasing prosocial beliefs related to bullying; and (3) increasing social-emotional skills.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Story-Talk – Interactive Book Reading Program | Interactive book reading is a reading strategy intended to promote the development of language and literacy skills in young children from low-income families.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Strengthening Families 10-14 (SF10-14)        | SF10-14 is a 7-session parenting and youth skills program, designed to improve parenting and family management skills, with the long-term goal of a reducing aggressive and hostile behavior, substance abuse, and other problem behaviors of young adolescents.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Strong African American Families Program      | A 7-week Interactive educational program for African American parents and their early adolescent children that strives to reduce adolescent substance use, conduct problems, and sexual involvement. Goals are achieved by enhancing parents'/caregivers' skill set for disciplining and guiding youth, helping youth develop a healthy future orientation and increased acceptance of parental guidance, and teaching youth skills for dealing with peer pressure to be involved with risky behavior. |
| Success for All                               | Success for All establishes school-wide reform which includes a basic literacy program that ensures that every child reaches the 3rd grade on time with the adequate reading skills and builds on those skills throughout elementary school.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Targeted Reading Intervention                 | Individualized instruction by classroom teachers takes the form of 15-minute sessions for a struggling reader in kindergarten and first grade until the child makes rapid progress in reading.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Triple P System                               | Triple P System uses a public health approach to reach all parents in a community to enhance parental competence and prevent or alter dysfunctional parenting practices, thereby reducing family risk factors both for child maltreatment and for children's behavioral and emotional problems.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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Table 2.2 (Continued)

| Name                          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wyman's Teen Outreach Program | The Teen Outreach Program® seeks to reduce rates of teen pregnancy, course failure, and academic suspension by providing community volunteer experiences and enhancing general adolescent developmental skills, such as understanding selves, understanding relationships to others, managing conflict and stress, making good decisions, and setting goals. |

**Program fidelity** is extremely important. Fidelity means implementing the program the way that researchers intended for it to be implemented. The California Healthy Kids Resource Center identified seven dimensions of fidelity: delivery, dosage, setting, target population, materials, provider qualifications, and provider training (<http://www.californiahealthykids.org/fidelity>). *Delivery* refers to the instructional strategies employed to deliver the material (for example didactic lecture, Socratic method, modeling, participant practice, and social reinforcement). *Dosage* refers to the number, length, and frequency of sessions in the program. How many sessions do participants attend (one, five, nine . . .)? How long are the sessions (one hour, four hours, etc.)? How often are the sessions (daily, weekly, monthly)? *Setting* refers to where the program takes place (classroom, community center, etc.). *Target population* refers to the intended participants (gender, age, specific characteristics or risk factors, prior history of exhibiting behavior). *Materials* include all the written and audiovisual modules included in the program curriculum. *Provider qualifications* are the credentials or qualifications required of program providers (Marriage and Family Therapist (M.F.T.), Master of Social Work (M.S.W.), health specialist, teacher, etc.). Finally, *provider training* is the nature and length of training required to become a program provider.

If any of the above components are not delivered exactly as intended, the program is unlikely to achieve the desired results. Reducing the measured quantity, altering the delivery, or substituting and/or removing parts of the curriculum are almost guaranteed to reduce, if not completely eliminate, positive outcomes. For example, researchers found no measurable effect of the Life Skills Training program (a model Blueprints program) when less than 60% of the curriculum was delivered (Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1995). Similarly, programs intended for one population, but given to another may not work. A universal program intended for all adolescents in a community that is given to adolescents with severe behavioral problems is not going to achieve the same results. Moreover, researchers have found that programs designed for boys often do not work effectively for girls (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008).

In general, research reveals that the most effective programs include: a focus on high-risk youth (as opposed to low risk); are intensive (have a high dosage) and focus on multiple risk factors (specifically the ones that cause the delinquency in the group being treated); start early in life; are community-based (not institutional); and have an authoritative ("firm but fair") relationship between counselors and juveniles. Finally, it is important to remember that crime prevention does not occur in a vacuum, but rather within society, and a program or policy that works in one community may not work in another community (even if the program is implemented with strong fidelity).

### What Doesn't Work

In addition to knowing what does work, we also know that a few (popular) crime prevention/intervention strategies do not work. In some cases, these strategies simply do not reduce the unwanted behavior;

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for example D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education),<sup>10</sup> boot camps, court supervision, and intensive supervision probation or parole. In other cases, such as Scared Straight, the program *increases* the unwanted behavior. Policy makers and practitioners should avoid these programs completely.

### Available Resources on Evidence-Based Practices

The best programs, the ones that have proven effective (and on which policy should be based), can be found in the academic literature as well as several websites maintained by academic research centers, think tanks, foundations, nonprofits, and governmental agencies. While there are several websites purporting to highlight effective programs, some of these are simply company websites attempting to promote their product(s). The very best resources for evidence-based practices are the following (all are nonpartisan and wholly focused on providing research findings to decision makers):

#### Blueprints

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) at University of Colorado, Boulder, established in 1996, is one of the most well respected authorities on violence prevention programs in the world. The center evaluates programs that promote healthy youth development. It also provides information on scientifically tested "Blueprints" programs, and trains practitioners in implementation (<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/>). In the past 16 years, the center has reviewed more than 1,100 programs. Of these, only 8 (less than 1%) met their extremely stringent criteria and earned the title "model" program, and 36 (3%) were deemed "promising" (Blueprints). See Table 2.2 (pp. 26–31) for a current list of programs.

#### Campbell Collaboration

The Campbell Collaboration is an international organization of researchers that exists to "help people make well-informed decisions by preparing, maintaining, and disseminating systematic reviews in education, criminal justice, and social welfare" ([www.campbellcollaboration.org/](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/)). Since 2005, it has published more than 75 systematic reviews on varied criminal justice policy-relevant topics using meta-analysis, a technique that allows researchers to summarize the results of multiple studies on a topic. Unlike Blueprints, which only highlights programs proven to be effective, Campbell reviews provide information on the relevant knowledge of what does and does not work.

#### Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP)

Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) was created in 1983 to "carry out practical, nonpartisan research—at legislative direction—on issues of importance to Washington State" ([www.wsipp.wa.gov](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov)). Since the early 1990s, WSIPP has used meta-analysis and cost-benefit analysis to study a variety of criminal justice policies and programs. It does not conduct program evaluations, but is well known and respected for its research, especially its cost-benefit analyses. It is a very good example of policy makers requesting (and using) research to inform significant policy questions, and may be one of the reasons that Washington state is often considered at the forefront of juvenile and criminal justice policy.

<sup>10</sup> While DARE does not decrease substance use among teens, it has been shown to positively impact participants' view of police officers (Lucas, 2008).

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### OJJDP Model Programs

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) maintains a database of more than 200 evidence-based youth programs for practitioners, policy makers, and researchers (<http://www.ojjdp.gov>). The database includes programs at every stage of the juvenile justice process, including prevention, immediate sanctions, intermediate sanctions, residential, and reentry. Programs are rated as exemplary, effective, or promising based on research results.

### Crimesolutions.gov

Crimesolutions.gov is a relatively new website, created in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Justice to make it easy for practitioners and researchers to identify "what works" in criminal justice, juvenile justice, and crime victim services. It covers a much wider range of topics than Blueprints, but is not as selective as Blueprints. To date, 253 programs in 8 categories have been reviewed; 72 (28%) are classified as "effective," and 157 (61%) are classified as "promising."<sup>11</sup>

A similar "what works" website for education (<http://whatworks.ed.gov>) is also very useful and contains programs that can reduce delinquency by targeting school risk factors, such as student behavior and dropout prevention. There is also a "what works" website for Problem Oriented Policing ([www.popcenter.org/](http://www.popcenter.org/)) and for substance abuse prevention (<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/>).

### Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

The Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization devoted to providing information about "social interventions shown in rigorous studies to produce sizable, sustained benefits to participants and/or society" (<http://evidencebasedprograms.org/>). The organization's purpose is to help policy officials identify the few truly effective social interventions (those backed by randomized control experiments) from the many programs that claim to be effective (but are not backed by rigorous research). It is much broader than the other websites mentioned and includes research on homelessness, mental health, obesity, teen pregnancy, employment, and a host of other social issues in addition to crime and justice, but it only considers programs supported by a randomized control experimental design (few programs in criminal justice are of this design). It ranks strategies as "top tier" or "near top tier." Thus far, 10 strategies earned the "top tier" ranking and 7 earned the "near top tier" ranking.



## Conclusion

Historically, crime policy was formed by instinct and political ideology alone. For much of our country's history, we knew little about the causes of crime or about how to control/prevent crime. This situation has begun to change and much has been learned about preventing and reducing crime and delinquency since that first watershed report by University of Maryland scholars in 1997. As new research becomes available on "what works," some institutions and states are beginning to look for scientific, not just anecdotal, evidence that crime policies are likely to succeed and that public monies are spent wisely. Fifteen years ago, the major impediment to offering effective prevention programs was a dearth of rigorous research; today

<sup>11</sup> There is most certainly a selection bias effect here, as only researchers with significant (usually positive) findings submit their research for inclusion on the website.

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the problem is funding (Greenwood & Turner, 2011). If there is one good thing that came out of the economic downturn (recession) which began in 2008, it is that many practitioners and policy makers are earnestly seeking cost-effective, evidence-based practices and policies to replace the arcane, cost-prohibitive incarceration-based strategies that have been the mainstay of criminal justice systems around the nation for the past 30 to 40 years. Nevertheless, though we have made much progress, we are far from the point where criminal justice policy is guided primarily by solid research rather than politics.

Still, the big question that criminologists, criminal justice practitioners, and policy makers want to answer is: How do we reduce crime? There are essentially two paths from which to choose. We can decrease the recidivism rate of convicted offenders, or we can prevent would-be-offenders from entering the criminal justice system in the first place. Whichever option we choose (this chapter focuses primarily on the second option), research should guide our solutions. If we are serious about preventing crime, our solutions should (a) be theory driven, (b) focus on the known risk factors of criminality, and (c) be appropriate for the targeted population. In other words, our policies and programs should take into account what we know about crime and criminals—*who* commits crime and *why* they commit crime—and focus on reducing the causal mechanisms that lead to criminal behavior.

Fortunately, we now know a lot about the causes and correlates of delinquency as well as how to prevent crime and reduce reoffending in a variety of arenas. For example, research continually affirms that “programs that emphasize family interactions are the most successful” (Greenwood & Turner, 2011, p. 121); they are also very cost effective. However, despite enormous benefits and 18 years of child-rearing duties, few parents ever take a parenting class. Curiously, in comparison, it is commonplace (if not customary) for first-time parents in the United States to attend 20 to 40 hours of birthing classes prior to their expected due date in hopes of having a positive delivery experience (in spite of the fact that the active phases of childbirth typically last fewer than 5 hours). Imagine the positive benefits we could achieve if parents were offered (and participated in) low-cost or free parenting classes in their community, with childcare provided, on a semi-regular (or as needed) basis as their children aged and entered new developmental stages (infant, toddler, child, preteenager, teenager). It can be done easily and inexpensively by working with schools, community groups, and faith-based organizations.

Good research should guide policy; it should not determine policy. Best policy choices should be made using a variety of criteria, including research findings. For example, research supports the efficacy of high-quality preschool programs for many young children, but providing free high-quality preschool for all children in the United States would be very costly. While it may be good policy to provide free high-quality preschool to all children, it may be cost prohibitive. We must consider the social costs and future productivity benefits as well as the delinquency reducing benefits when deciding if something is “good policy” or not.

#### KEY TERMS

|                                         |                                                |                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Adolescent-limited offenders            | Concentrated disadvantage                      | Life-course-persistent offenders                   |
| Blueprints model and promising programs | Indicated prevention (aka tertiary prevention) | National Institute of Justice (NIJ)                |
| Career criminals                        | Law Enforcement Assistance Agency (LEAA)       | Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 |
| Collective efficacy                     |                                                | Program fidelity                                   |

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|                    |                           |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Protective factors | Selective prevention (aka | Universal prevention (aka |
| Risk factors       | secondary prevention)     | primary prevention        |

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the federal government's role in creating and disseminating criminal justice research?
2. What are the known facts concerning crime and delinquency? How should these facts be incorporated into criminal justice policy?
3. What are the known risk factors of delinquency? Which do you find most compelling? What are the implications for criminal justice policy?
4. The mayor of your city asks for your thoughts about crime prevention (or intervention) strategies/programs that can be used in your city. What do you tell her or him? Which strategies are most effective? Where can she or he go to find more information?

### WEBSITES FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

University of Colorado Blueprints: <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/>  
 Campbell Collaboration: <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/>  
 Washington State Institute of Public Policy: <http://www.wsip.wa.gov>  
 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention: <http://www.ojjdp.gov>  
 Crime Solutions: <http://www.crimesolutions.gov>  
 U.S. Department of Education, What Works Database: <http://whatworks.ed.gov>  
 Problem Oriented Policing Center: <http://www.popcenter.org/>  
 U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices: <http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/>  
 Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy: <http://evidencebasedprograms.org/>  
 National Institute of Justice: <http://www.nij.gov/>