Research Forum: Building Community Trust and Justice

Date: January 13, 2016, Duquesne University

Facilitator: Erin Dalton, DHS
Notetaker: Lamar Foster

Attendees: Alfred Blumstein, Carnegie Mellon University
Christine Sarteschi, Chatham University
Norman Conti, Duquesne University
Tracey McCants Lewis, Duquesne University
Tiffany Sizemore Thompson, Duquesne University
Eva Simms, Duquesne University
Ben Wecht, Cyril Wecht Institute
Sean Martin, Point Park University
Jeff Shook, University of Pittsburgh
Tracie Keesee, Dept. of Justice National Initiative, Program Director, John Jay College
Karina Chavez, PCHE
Lina Dostilio, Duquesne University, Center for Community-Engaged Teaching and Research
Marina Duane, Allegheny County Department of Human Services
Megan Good, Allegheny County Department of Human Services
Molly Morrill, Allegheny County Department of Human Services
Kathryn Collins
Chief Cameron McLay, Bureau of Police City of Pittsburgh
Commander Eric Holmes, Bureau of Police City of Pittsburgh

Forum Convener: Karina Chavez, Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE)
Forum Host: Lina Dostilio, Center for Community-Engaged Teaching and Research, Duquesne University
Next Meeting Host: Jeff Shook, Center for Race and Social Concerns, University of Pittsburgh
Time/Date TBD

8:40 – 9:00 am: Convening, Lina Dostilio and President Charles Dougherty

9:00 – 9:30 am: Report out from the National Initiative's Research Roundtable, Tracie Keesee; responses from local researchers who attended Roundtable: Tracey McCants Lewis, Christine Sarteschi and Tiffany Sizemore Thompson

9:30 – 10:15: Discussion: What aspects of the National Initiative's research agenda might be supported by work currently happening within the Pittsburgh research community?

10:15 – 10:45: Focusing in on the Pittsburgh Context: what are our pressing questions? Cameron McLay, Chief of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, invited responses from Alfred Blumenstein, and Jeff Shook,

10:45 – 11:30: Discussion: How can Pittsburgh's research community assist local efforts to build community trust and justice? What challenges persist that complicate the implementation of research in the local context? Where do we go from here? What research agendas could be pursued? What barriers exist presently?

11:55 – Noon: Closing, Karina Chavez

SUMMARY:

- Theoretical orientations:
    - Theories of identity formation among police;
    - Theories of culture change to guide police-focused intervention;
    - Theories of historical and communal trauma to orient interventions;
    - Theories of individual trauma to frame research
    - Theories of human development that can be used to frame youth-focused de-escalation strategies
    - Systems theory and ecological models for examining change
- Points of inquiry:
    - About police and police training: demilitarization of the police department, what is the qualitative change observable within police pre-academy and post-academy (how does training positively shape police)?
    - About community: investigating how community cohesion is strengthened and how safety is community-owned; what is driving the conflict between communities and police?
    - Specific investigation of policing and special populations such as people who have mental illness or people who are homeless;
    - Organizational research on what feedback loops between community and police can be established, and how social systems and policing are bridged;
    - About youth: an entire agenda dedicated to youth and community safety needs to be established: what is the role of youth in crisis response and intervention development, what is meaningful and respectful youth engagement, how are youth-focused de-escalation strategies developed?
- Points of action:
    - Youth capacity building and strengthening knowledge of and connection between youth-related supportive services,
    - Development of community-based, cross-sector supported trauma/crisis response teams.
    - Attract resources for this coalition to support data management
    - Gain clarity on protocols that govern data sharing between police department and researchers
    - Develop "rules of engagement" for the research coalition. Example: agree to multiple (at least dual) products: for each research endeavor, likely will have a product that is traditionally framed for an academic audience but MUST have at least one product that is framed for practical use.

NOTES:

1. Report out from the National Initiative's Research Roundtable

Tracie Keese begins session by stating, as part of the Department of Justice's ongoing commitment to strengthening the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve and protect, former Attorney General Eric Holder announced six cities to host pilot sites for the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice. The initiative will seeks to assess the police-community relationship in each of the pilot sites, as well develop detailed site-specific plan that will enhance procedural justice, reduce bias and support reconciliation in communities where trust has been eroded.

The six pilot sites are Birmingham, AL; Ft. Worth, TX; Gary, IN; Minneapolis, MN; Pittsburgh, PA; and Stockton, CA.

2. Pilot Cities' Current Activities

In Minneapolis, the focus of the seminar was how we deal with traumatic events. Many questions were posed – how do we not take sides (community vs police), how do we engage, and how do researchers come into play. The seminar ended on a high note, however a few days later, Jamar Clark, 24-year-old black male shot by a Minneapolis police officer.

Birmingham, AL discussed the impact of making money off of fines and fees and issues around mental health. Fort Worth, TX recently hired a new chief of police. The majority of the discussion was around how they can support the new chief and centering a research agenda around those efforts. In Stockton, CA the issue was discerning what procedural justice looked like. Lastly, in Gary, IN the conversation centered on the impact of having government intervention and sharing research with other departments.

3. Recap of the New Haven, CT research forum

The six pilot cities and researchers from each were invited to attend a research roundtable in New Haven, CT to learn about the research agenda for the three pillars of the national initiative: procedural justice, implicit bias, and reconciliation. Of the three, the area of reconciliation is the most open in terms of determining what will be investigated and how.

4. Responses from Local Researchers who attended New Haven Roundtable

Tiffany Sizemore Thompson, Duquesne University School of Law Assistant Clinical Professor, is working with youth, particularly around children and police interactions (making it safer). She does not believe that Pittsburgh is ready yet for reconciliation without first acknowledging the historical events to this point.

Tracey McCants Lewis, Duquesne University School of Law Assistant Clinical Professor, conducts a series of expungement clinics and Know Your Rights seminars to expand community members' knowledge of their legal rights, particular with interacting with police officers. Additionally, Dr. Lewis is working on strengthening community and police relationships and ex-offender re-entry into community.

Jeff Shook, University of Pittsburgh School of Social Work Associate Professor, advocates we think about two components – 1) other actors in addition to police, such as the youth and teachers, and 2) how can we support people who work in community-based systems. Create or adopts interventions that work with police. We should seek to get a procedural justice grant to help fund research around understanding police interactions with the mentally ill.

Chief McLay responded to Dr. Shook by saying "we don't know what we don't know." We need to setup times for communication with mental health experts and police. The crisis response team that used to exist needs to be activated.

5. Working with Youth

Chief McLay says that building positive relationships and having meaningful exchanges with youth is challenging. What is the vehicle to have meaningful exchanges? How do we facilitate communication? What do youth interactions look like with police? We must also understand youth psychology – is there a developmental model for de-escalation? How do the models interpret the police activity?

Jeff Shook states that there needs to be informed trauma based responses integrated into police training. Group responds by saying that you're not going to fix the problem just by training the police – "police training does not stand in a vacuum." Additionally, he states that we must look at social and community responsibilities.

Sean Martin adds that looking at other countries to see how they are doing policing can be a viable option, e.g. Japan. Japan does public outreach at a young age.

6. Internal Procedural Justice

Inconsistencies in leadership makes police officers angrier. Employee conduct was an issue due to the issues happening inside the police department. We need to build the department within to fix the integrity of the leadership system, this requires some research in order to effectively be implemented.

The structure of the organization needs to be evaluated and the identity formation of officers explored. How should the police force function? What is a good police officer? There is no professional code of conduct or standards across the nation. It was noted that there is a paramilitary trend among police recruits: there is significant overlap between military veterans and recruits. Veterans typically come to the police force with stress disorders. How do we define our role? The U.K. has a police college. The structure cannot be a one size fits all.

7. Why Don't People Want to Become Police Officers?

A number of criminal justice faculty commented on how few of their criminal justice students want to become police officers.

The face of the department needs to change; there needs to be more diversity. How do we incentivize people in becoming Pittsburgh police officers? We do not hire people based on diversity, but rather a numerical process. We need to create a loan forgiveness program for people doing public service jobs.

Most people have an irrational view of police officers. Social media spreads a negativity more than positivity, some have had bad experience with police officers, and those who do become police officers

are intrinsically motivated. We need to deal with the cultural experiences people have with police officers, intrinsic motivation is not enough to sustain the police force.

8.   Pressing Questions and Thoughts from a Police Perspective

What is culture and how do you change it? Culture is a set of shared assumptions about how to correctly think, feel, or act based on what was successful before. We need to recognize that we do what we do because it worked in the past. Perhaps police officers don't know why they do what they do. Oftentimes the old assumptions do not work, but they are drilled so deep, they are sub intentional about the right way of policing. you don't go at culture, because it fights back, because you violate the underlying assumptions (e.g. you have each other's back, which can lead to legal problems).

The Chief continues to add that he is getting pushback as he tries to change procedure. We're doomed if we approach it as "changing culture," the organization is embedded in its surrounding culture – the police reflect it. Racism and unconscious bias is in police and community. The police need to listen to the community and get to a place where they can show their own concerns in fruitful dialogue. We need to go beyond police reform- create an academic language to talk about issues with officers (e.g. racist attribution), this makes it easier to talk about issues and is experienced less as a personal attack.

One perspective is that police are not broken. If you eliminate the dysfunctional behaviors, then you will change the culture. We need to look for the functional behaviors and efforts and leverage them. Pride is the core element. If we have problems in the police force, then we have problems in the community.

Chief McLay interjects and states that the issues did not start and will not end with the police force. We need to talk from a balanced perspective – community and police. Leverage the positive aspects of the collective culture. It's our collective perspective that's needs to be taken into account. People are watching us, what do we want the narrative to be? We have an opportunity to dictate what the world is going to say about Pittsburgh. It's about how we will come together.

9.   Collective Thoughts Amongst Group

An important question - how do we support police in the work they are doing? As an example, police were not familiar with the social supports available to them when working with juveniles. There is an app being developed to help police officers identify resources for homeless youth. We need to find ways to document the additional resources necessary to support policing.

Reconciliation is the key element. The operational piece is the police. We need to identify what drives the community to conflict, and what the police officers are doing that is counterproductive. We need to change incentives to change behavior – using numbers of arrests as an incentive is not an effective tool for soliciting proper behavior from police officers when dealing with the community. Marijuana laws need to change as well, how will police respond to the decriminalization of marijuana?

Having a sense of community lowers crime and perhaps the national initiative is too police centered. As long as crime is concentrated in African American communities, the police will be there. The intention of the National Initiative is to build efficacy in communities to affect change. The initiative doesn't want to do more harm; police can't be held accountable for everything that happens in the community. The question is asked - How do we inform the work in Pittsburgh? We need to create the research agenda - police first then community level. The nature of the research done is important: traditional, extractive or evaluative research is not the only methods to be used. Participatory, collaborator, qualitative methods are vital. Creating conversation arenas with community, rather than just data.

10. **Barriers, Concerns, and Next Steps**

Finding time for people to come together and ask what they are doing. We need to write something up for proper audience – police and communities. People from up top are a bit disconnected with things on the ground, but can help bring work to larger audience, especially if it's innovative. The ideas need to be brought respectfully and thoughtfully. Some think that we can't replicate what's happening abroad in Pittsburgh. We have to think systematically together, leverage partnerships, find a broad range of leaders, and seek ways to find funding -we could get collective of grant writers (internal and external). We need to get real tangible outcomes. We need to make clear the protocol to reach/work with police department for researchers. The fundamental research issue is how police officers and community members relate to one another.

ACTION: Each researcher in the room will send their project ideas to one another and continue to have an open and fluid dialogue about research that can be conducted to better police and community relationship for follow up at next discussion (Slated for University of Pittsburgh, Center for Race and Social Concerns).