

Undergraduate Thesis Prospectus

Effects of Access to Mental Health Services
Following Release from Custody
(technical research project in Systems Engineering)

Movements to Defund the Police
(sociotechnical research project)

by

Colin Cool

November 2, 2020

technical project collaborators:

Grace Boland
Maddie McNult
Nate Donkoh-Moore
Patrick Leonard

On my honor as a University student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment as defined by the Honor Guidelines for Thesis-Related Assignments.

Colin Cool

Technical advisor: Michael C Smith, Department of Engineering Systems and Environment

STS advisor: Peter Norton, Department of Engineering and Society

General Research Problem

How can the United States reduce the collateral consequences of its criminal justice system?

The United States promises its citizens “the equal protection of the laws.” But the promise has been unfulfilled. Americans account for 5 percent of the world’s population, but prisons in the United States hold 20 percent of the world’s incarcerated population (Wagner & Bertram, 2020). About one in five prison inmates has a serious mental illness (Torrey, 2009). Americans angered by police killings of unarmed citizens, most of them Black men, have been demanding police reform. Some have called for defunding police departments.

Effects of Access to Mental Health Services Following Release from Custody

Are the implemented mental health services yielding desired outcomes?

This project identifies best practices for serving the mentally-ill inmate population based on evidence developed by integrating data resources from multiple local criminal justice agencies. Our goals include identifying the optimal dosage of services, answering whether services impact recidivism rates, and if success rates at linking people to mental health services have increased. The advisor of the capstone group is Dr. Preston White Jr. of the Engineering Systems and Environment department. Collaborators include Patrick Leonard, Grace Boland, Maddie McNult, and Nate Donkoh-Moore.

There will be two sets of presentations to the Charlottesville Community Criminal Justice Board (CCJB) and the local Evidence-Based Decision Making (EBDM) Policy Team. The first set of presentations will be at the end of the fall semester where progress will be outlined, but more importantly there will be an explanation of where the project will be taken in the spring. The second set will be a culmination of all work completed including key findings and data-driven answers to the client’s primary questions which pertain to the linkage of people to

services, those services success levels, and the optimal service dosage, or frequency, and length. Lastly, the findings will be documented in a SIEDS paper, presented at the conference in April 2021. Potential future investigations may involve the role COVID-19 response has played in mental health wellness of inmates. Conclusions found will help regional criminal justice system agencies and community mental health service providers better serve individuals suffering from severe mental illness. This project also emphasizes the need for research to help individuals suffering from mental illness in jails and prisons around the U.S.

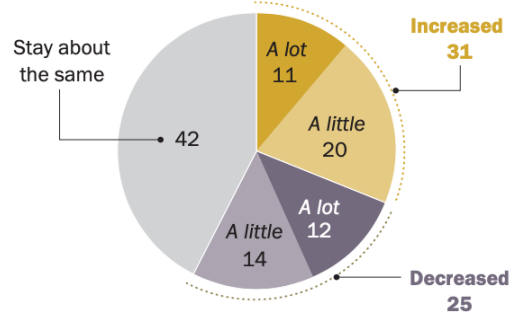
Movements to Defund the Police

How have the advocates and the critics of the “Defund the Police” campaign advanced their respective agendas?

Following numerous police killings of unarmed suspects, U.S. police departments are under scrutiny. Some reformers are demanding the reallocation of police budgets to other public health and safety needs. In 2017, state and local governments spent \$115 billion on police and \$79 billion on corrections (Urban Institute, 2020). In 2019, 1,004 people were fatally shot by police (Statistica, 2020). Black men were much more likely to be shot by police than others (Statistica, 2020). One in every 1,000 black men in the U.S. can expect to be killed by police (Edwards, 2019). Most Americans favor maintaining or increasing spending on police departments (fig. 1).

Far more Americans favor keeping spending on policing at current levels – or increasing it – than cutting spending

% who say spending on policing in your area should be ...



Note: No answer responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 16-22, 2020.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1. U.S. public opinion on police funding (Pew, 2020).

According to Covert (2020), spending on police departments by state and local governments jumped from about \$17.61 billion in 1960 to \$142.58 billion in 2018, in constant 2020 dollars. In 1980 the crime rate in the U.S. was 5,950 per 100,000 people. Though it fell to 2,580 per 100,000 in 2018, spending on police steadily rose over the intervening decades. In New York City's 2020 budget, the police department accounts for 7.7 percent of the city's budget. This accounts for more than what was allocated to the Housing Preservation and Development, Health and Mental Hygiene, Homeless Services, and Youth and Community Development departments combined (Covert, 2020).

Jacobs et al. (2020) argue that by supplementing police, social workers engage in carceral social work, using coercion and punishment to manage Black, brown, Indigenous, and and poor communities across four social work arenas: gender-based violence, child welfare, schools, and health. They propose dismantling police collaborations and establishing community-centered

mutual aid alternatives.

Police reform movements in which many members favor defunding police departments have sprouted in US cities. MPD150 is a broad and inclusive police reform coalition in Minneapolis advocating structural change in policing. Its report, “Enough is Enough,” is a call to develop alternatives to policing (MPD150, 2020). Stop Police Terror Project-DC (SPTDC) demands alternatives to policing in Washington, D.C., including community-led peacekeeping that returns power to policed communities. According to SPTDC (2020), in an online hearing with D.C. city council in June, “nearly 90 people shared their expertise and lived experiences—many of them extremely traumatic—with police in DC,” expressing “their overwhelming anger, rage from years of being ignored and condescended to by elected officials supposedly meant to serve them.” Though some city council members supported calls to reduce the Metropolitan Police Department’s \$500 million budget, SPTDC concluded that the virtual meeting “was not engagement, this was a bone thrown in hopes we would go away.”

According to the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL), a national coalition: “We must divest from excessive, brutal, discriminatory policing and invest in a vision of community safety that works for everyone, not just an elite few” (M4BL, 2020). The initiative is a “response to a legacy of police and proxy violence that most recently took the lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and Tony McDade,” and part of a larger “uprising against excessive, brutal, militarized policing”; their demand is “to defund the police after decades of inaction and failed reforms, consent decrees, investigations, and oversight.”

Police unions and their political allies have attacked such demands. The Los Angeles Police Protective League (LAPPL), a union for the city's officers, said budget cuts would be the “quickest way to make our neighborhoods more dangerous,” and that “with violent crime

increasing, a global pandemic and nearly a week's worth of violence, arson, and looting, 'defunding' the LAPD is the most irresponsible thing anyone can propose" (Balsamo, 2020).

References

- Balsamo, M. (2020, June 8). Black Lives Matter's big ask: What does 'defund the police' mean? Sydney Morning Herald. <https://www.smh.com.au/world/north-america/black-lives-matter-s-big-ask-what-does-defund-the-police-mean-20200608-p550dr.html>
- Covert, B. (2020). How to Make Defunding the Police a Reality. The Nation (July 13/20, 2020 Issue). <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/police-reform-defund-activism/>
- M4BL (2020). Movement for Black Lives. Defund the Police. <https://m4bl.org/defund-the-police/>
- Edwards, F., & Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (2019) Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821204116>
- Jacobs, L. & Kim, M. & Whitfield, D. & Gartner, R. & Panichelli, M. & Kattari, S. & Downey, M. & McQueen, S. & Shanté, M. (2020). Defund the Police: Moving Towards an Anti-Carceral Social Work. <http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/id/eprint/39769>
- MPD150. (2020). Enough is Enough: A 150-Year Performance Review of the Minneapolis Police Department. <https://www.mpd150.com/report/>
- Statista (2020, Oct. 5). Statista Research Department. Majority of Public Favors Giving Civilians the Power to Sue Police Officers for Misconduct. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/07/09/majority-of-public-favors-giving-civilians-the-power-to-sue-police-officers-for-misconduct/>
- Statista (2020, Oct. 5). Statista Research Department. People shot to death by U.S. police, by race 2017-2020. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/585152/people-shot-to-death-by-us-police-by-race/#statisticContainer>
- SPTDC (2020, June 25). Stop Police Terror Project-DC. Stop Police Terror Project DC Demands Better Than A \$15 Million Cut To MPD Budget [Press Release]. <https://www.sptdc.com/press-releases/2020/6/25/stop-police-terror-project-dc-demands-better-than-a-15-million-cut-to-mpd-budget>
- Torrey EF, Zdanowicz MT, Kennard AD et al. (2014). The treatment of persons with mental illness in prisons and jails: A state survey. Treatment Advocacy Center. <https://www.treatmentadvocacycenter.org/storage/documents/treatment-behind-bars/treatment-behind-bars.pdf>

Urban Institute. (2020, February 4). Police and Corrections Expenditures.
<https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/state-and-local-backgrounders/police-and-corrections-expenditures>

Wagner P, & Bertram W (2020, January 16). What percent of the U.S. is incarcerated? Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/01/16/percent-incarcerated/>