

Firearms and Violence Topical Working Group Meeting Summary 2011

November 30 and December 1, 2011

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Meeting Results: A Summary of Issues, Questions and Gaps

On November 30 and December 1, 2011, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) convened a group of experts to form the Firearms and Violence Research Working Group. After considering the reviews presented and discussed at the meeting and presented below, the working group identified seven topical areas and subareas that if addressed would advance our understanding of firearms violence and identify effective strategies that could reduce gun-related violent crime.^[1]

Maintain a focus on firearms and violence. In the 2010 review and assessment of NIJ, research on firearms and violence was identified as one of the few topics that had received sustained, directed and cumulative support.^[2] The result, according to that report, was significant advances in our understanding of the aspect of crime in United States that accounts for the seriousness (i.e., lethality and degree of injury) of violent crime in our society. The Group noted that NIJ had not in recent years maintained this focus on firearms and violent crime, that no other federal research agency had addressed this topic, that few foundations supported basic research on this topic, and that the absence of support had resulted in a significant reduction in the amount of research and the numbers of researchers focusing on this topic. The absence of long-term support and concentrations of research excellence has resulted in a decline in the creation of new knowledge — basic and applied.

The Group concluded that the continuing lethality and seriousness of crime in the United States require continued investment in gun-related crime issues that should include a long-term commitment to topics and centers of excellence and require an ongoing mechanism for research agencies to expand and coordinate their efforts. The maintenance of a technical working group on this topic would assist NIJ in providing leadership in this research area.

Advancing basic knowledge on the acquisition of firearms used in crimes and defensive gun use. Largely due to the work supported by NIJ, we have accumulated a comprehensive

description of the role of firearms in crime. Unfortunately, these "facts" are dispersed across many disciplines, are not widely known, and are sometimes distorted for partisan reasons. Although the National Research Council (NRC) report [3] documented many of these "facts" the Group recommends that the research working group on firearms and violence be tasked with assembling a document that summarizes these findings and providing a review of the document that would assure widespread acceptance and recognition of what we currently know about the relationship between firearms and violent crime.

In the 1990s NIJ supported research to determine how individuals acquired the firearms that were used in the commission of crimes. These studies, although important additions to our understanding about the acquisition of firearms by criminals, are now almost 20 years old, and the methods used in these studies need significant improvement. The Group suggests that new efforts be undertaken to use improved methodologies to study and better understand the ways in which all criminals who use guns in the commission of their crimes acquire those guns. The first step in this effort would be the development of methodologies that would provide better estimates of gun acquisition than those used in the 1990 studies.

Studies of defensive gun use to date have focused primarily on estimating the number of times guns are used to prevent crimes. The NRC report identified the limitations of these approaches and established what appears to be today a reasonable estimate of the range of the number of times guns are used to prevent crimes. The next step in this research area should focus on the process of defensive gun use. This would be an effort to move beyond an estimation of extent to an understanding of the decision process that occurs during a potential crime in which a potential victim uses a gun to deter the criminal. The same kinds of studies should be undertaken in the topical area of right-to-carry. While the debate continues on the impact of right-to-carry laws on crime, almost no information is available on when and where individuals who have been granted the right to carry a weapon actually use the weapon to deter crime. Nor have there been detailed cost/benefit analyses of the actual use of guns for defensive purposes. Getting into the "black box" of defensive gun use will allow us to move beyond debates about the extent of defensive gun use to an understanding of when and how it happens. This has become even more important with the expansion of "stand your ground laws" which are intended to further establish the legal foundation for defensive gun use.

In recent years, police have developed numerous violence reduction programs that target gun violence. NRC has determined that these programs are highly effective in achieving gun violence reductions.[4] In some instances, the communities that are the target of these violence reduction efforts have resisted or not been properly prepared to cooperate with the police. Although we understand that the community needs to play an important role in violence reduction, little research has been conducted to identify the sources of community resistance. The Group believes that a focus on understanding these sources of resistance and how to develop violence-reduction programs that are supported by the community is critical. Related to these issues is the question of why concentrations of gun violence persist and return after successful interventions. Understanding how to reduce gun violence for the long term will be an important part of the effort to improve our knowledge of how to effectively mobilize the community in gun crime reductions.

Criminal justice topical areas. Hot spots policing is established as an effective evidence-based intervention for gun violence. What is not known is why and how these interventions work. Is it increases in guardianship; deterrence; social space uses — why do the variety of interventions labeled hot spots work, why do they vary in their effectiveness, and why do some persist longer than others? If we could answer these questions, we could further develop this already effective intervention.

Many critics of new efforts to reduce gun violence suggest that what we need to do is more fully enforce the prohibitions in place, especially for high risk offenders. Included in this suggestion is the issue of the optimum length of some prohibitions. The Group agreed that there has been no research to date to address the issue of full enforcement of existing federal and state prohibitions and little recent work on the issue of their length. This effort would best be done experimentally in jurisdictions that have available to them a wide range of options including enhanced sentences, restrictions on gun possession for high risk categories, and alternatives to traditional processing of gun offenders.

As with other aspects of criminal justice processing, little is known about the role prosecutors play in the efforts to reduce gun violence, especially with regard to prosecutions to disrupt drug markets. In addition, more research is needed on how bail amounts are set for gun offenses, the impact of the various forms of gun courts, and the impact of differences in how judges hand down sentences for similar gun offenses/offenders. The group suggests that a concentrated research effort on how gun crimes and gun market crimes are developed and prosecuted would materially increase our understanding of how to improve the use of the criminal justice system to deter gun crimes and disrupt gun markets.

Prevention topical areas. The group concluded that prevention continues to be an underdeveloped research area. As the NRC report concluded, no prevention programs have been rigorously demonstrated to be effective. In part, this is because so little research support has been provided to this type of research. The group urges the development and testing of gun violence prevention programs based on general prevention theory. A particular focus should be on collaboration with health systems and providers in terms of the use and study of individual and environmental level data and interventions, to better target high risk persons and places.

Gun markets topical areas. There was widespread consensus in the group that research on how guns are acquired for criminal use and how those acquisition lines can be disrupted is vital. This has been mentioned above. In addition to the topics discussed above, this research area should include studies of the "life cycle" of crime guns (tracing guns from the gun crime to the manufacturer, identifying all intermediate owners and possessors and their means of acquisition). This research would assist in identifying possible new ways to disrupt acquisition of guns for use in crimes.

Improving data on guns in the United States. The conclusions of the NRC report on this topic are still true. Improved data on gun possession, gun acquisition, and gun use are needed. While there are legitimate concerns about the accuracy of current measures and while there are legitimate concerns about the ability of survey methods to measure such a sensitive topic, the group believes a program of research on ways to improve measures of these topics is necessary to provide us with measures that have greater acceptability and known estimates of measurement error. This work could lay the foundation for addressing many of the questions surrounding guns and violent crime that to date have proven to be difficult to resolve.

Comparative research topics. The group noted that there are efforts ongoing in other countries that touch on all of the topical areas noted above. The group suggests that it would be useful to monitor these efforts, participate in them where appropriate, and establish multinational research efforts when necessary.

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Day One — November 30, 2011

Welcome and Introductions

Dr. Charles Wellford opened the meeting as facilitator and asked participants to introduce themselves and also provide some information about their connection to research on firearms and violence (see [agenda](#) and [list of participants](#)).

Opening Remarks

Dr. John Laub, Director of NIJ, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that NIJ is striving to lead research on crime and justice including firearms and violence. To do that, NIJ is developing a cutting-edge research agenda and building a cumulative knowledge base. He said that NIJ is giving increasing attention to how scientific knowledge is diffused. NIJ is using translational medicine as a model and exploring ways that NIJ can develop a translational criminology.

Dr. Laub told the group that NIJ has formed topical working groups in the Office of Research and Evaluation to assist the field in the identification of key research questions, issues and gaps in knowledge. He also said that NIJ is promoting research on issues such as firearms and violence by coordinating and creating partnerships with other organizations, agencies and constituencies. He suggested that challenges and obstacles make it difficult to work with a topic such as firearms and violence as it is full of ideology, but with little research or established methodology. In this regard, Dr. Laub expressed appreciation to participants for volunteering to help NIJ and the field.

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The NRC Report — Charles Wellford

[View Charles Wellford's Slides](#)

Dr. Charles Wellford from the University of Maryland reviewed findings and recommendations from the National Research Council (NRC) 2005 panel study and resulting report, [Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review Exit Notice](#). He chaired the NRC panel, sharing editing responsibilities with John Pepper and Carol Petrie.

By 2005, research indicated that higher rates of household gun ownership appear to be associated with higher rates of gun suicides, illegal diversion from legitimate commerce is an important source of guns used to commit crimes and suicides, firearms are used defensively many times per day, and some types of targeted law enforcement interventions may lower gun-related crimes. Dr. Wellford reported that the panel found no credible evidence to suggest that right-to-carry laws decrease or increase crime. Also at the time of the report, there was no research to show that the more than 80 gun violence prevention programs the committee examined had any effect on children's behavior, knowledge, attitudes or beliefs about firearms.

The NRC panel found that many questions surrounding firearms and violence cannot be addressed with existing data and research. Existing research and data remain too weak to support policy development. For instance, research concerning defensive gun use is so disparate in data and methods that huge differences in results cannot be explained. The methodology necessary for unraveling causal relationships between firearms policy and violence was seldom employed or

adequately developed in the research reviewed by the panel. Many policy dilemmas remained problematic at the time of the report, including the need for public authorities to carefully consider conflicting constitutional issues, facts and opinions regarding firearms and violence, and where the balance lies in the costs and benefits of private gun ownership.

Dr. Wellford reviewed report recommendations including federal government support for a systematic program of data collection and research specifically addressing firearms and violence. Current ownership data are limited and little scientific data exist on firearms markets. He suggested that the National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS) begins to address this problem, but only 22 states have adopted it to date, and funding support for the states continues to be an issue.

In addition to much-needed development of data and methods, further research is needed on markets, defensive gun use, right-to-carry laws, suicide and criminal justice interventions. He suggested this meeting of the working group would contribute up-to-date information to the discussion and identify important research issues, questions and gaps for consideration by the field of research on firearms and violence.

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Criminal Justice Interventions — Ed McGarrell

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Dr. Ed McGarrell from Michigan State University presented information on evaluation research involving criminal justice interventions since the 2005 NRC report on firearms and violence, including gun courts, enhanced sentencing, mandatory sentencing, place-based and problem-oriented policing, policing gun hot spots, policing violent gun offenders and Project Safe Neighborhoods.

Gun courts. Dr. McGarrell said that specialized courts appear to be emerging as another way to divert gun offenders from the system. He reported a recent study in Alabama that demonstrated lower recidivism rates among participants, although the research design was not very strong. Other jurisdictions have begun using gun courts including Brooklyn, N.Y., Cambridge, Mass., Philadelphia, Pa., Providence, R.I., and Queens, N.Y. He said more research is needed using better methodology.

Enhanced and mandatory sentences for using a gun when committing a crime. The NRC panel reviewed 10 studies involving sentencing for gun crimes, and suggested that there is some evidence of some impact on some crimes in some locations. Dr. McGarrell said that to date findings are mixed and implementation issues notable in existing research. It is not unusual for prosecutors, for example, to drop offenses carrying mandatory sentences in plea bargaining to secure convictions in other charged crimes. Results from one study evaluating Project Exile, which included gun prosecutions as a main component, suggest that homicide was reduced. However, mandatory sentencing studies have provided mixed and contradictory results with limited evidence of impact.

Domestic violence prohibitions. Dr. McGarrell summarized three studies that have been conducted since the NRC report assessing reductions in violence as a result of prohibiting firearms possession by domestic violence offenders. Although results are promising, he suggested more study is needed in this and other areas of prohibiting firearms from specific groups such as mentally ill persons, noncitizens and domestic violence offenders.

Place-based problem-oriented policing. More research has been accomplished in the area of place-based and problem-oriented policing since the NRC report. He summarized a few examples of

interventions that have been implemented effectively. Recent evaluations have demonstrated the effectiveness of Philadelphia's foot patrol and Jacksonville's problem-oriented policing in violent crime hot spots. He suggested that more research be directed toward the sustainability of intervention effects associated with this type of action research.

Policing gun hotspots. Dr. McGarrell reviewed three recent studies providing further support for reducing gun violence hot spots, but all have some methodological limitations. Remaining hot spots research issues include the need to demonstrate long-term effects, substitution, adaptation and deterrence. He reiterated the NRC committee recommendation for sustained and systematic research on the impacts of different problem-oriented place-based interventions such as gun suppression patrols, targeted policing approaches and removal of high-risk guns.

Policing violent gun offenders. Dr. McGarrell then talked about interventions with known gun offenders. He highlighted a St. Louis program targeting juvenile offenders that sent officers to residences to request permission from parents to search the home for guns. They surprisingly received much cooperation from parents and appeared to have some effect on gun violence. Evaluation research on the popular Boston Operation Ceasefire program has showed an association between the program and a decline in violence, but the research design left some efficacy questions unanswered. The NRC committee recommended a sustained and systematic program of research on focused deterrence and prosecution. A series of other program evaluations have been published in peer-reviewed journals since then. They found similar results in Indianapolis, Ind., Lowell, Mass., Chicago, Ill., Stockton, Calif., and Cincinnati, Ohio, with most employing quasi-experimental methods similar to those used in evaluating Boston's Ceasefire.

Project Safe Neighborhoods. As a major Department of Justice initiative launched in 2001, Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) funded task forces with all U.S. Attorneys' Offices in the United States. Dr. McGarrell and Michigan State University provided training for the program sites and evaluated the overall PSN initiative. Training curriculum for task forces was based on Project Exile (Richmond) and Boston CeaseFire. He reported that a third to half of the PSN sites used program components such as call-in notification meetings for known gun crime offenders, probation/parole offender home visits, gun incident reviews, and cooperation with federal and local law enforcement such as joint gun case screening. The evaluation assessed implementation by looking at the local level of federal gun prosecution, the quality of local partnerships, and integration of research findings into program components. Findings suggest that target cities in higher implementation districts saw greater reductions in reported violent crime. Major limitations involved possible preexisting differences in target treatment and comparison cities. He added that a recent meta-analysis indicates that focused deterrence strategies may be generally associated with medium-sized crime reduction effects.

Dr. McGarrell briefly reviewed some ongoing research including reentry programs that are targeting violent ex-prisoners with focused deterrence strategies in Boston and Chicago. Early results suggest that this approach has some impact at the community level, but the cause of these effects is still unclear. Also, Hawaii Opportunity Probation with Enforcement (HOPE) was evaluated with a randomized control design, which showed significant reductions in arrests, positive drug tests, probation revocations and subsequent days in prison. The Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative (CAGI), another NIJ-funded evaluation using this approach, has shown no overall effect. But, it again appears that level of implementation is associated with effects, with high-implementation sites experiencing greater declines in reported crime than low-implementation and non-CAGI sites.

Criminal Justice Interventions – Discussion

Discussion around criminal justice interventions was far ranging and included place-based, hot spots, and focused deterrence programs and other strategies targeting firearms violence. Sentencing policy and options and alternative sanctions like specialty courts were also discussed. The group also spent some time talking about non-criminal justice interventions such as community prevention, background checks, protection orders and exclusionary policies.

Some working group participants described a public health intervention developed in Cardiff, Wales. The intervention involves identification of the locations of violent incidents associated with victims coming to emergency rooms and trauma centers. Violent hot spots are then targeted with interventions involving multidisciplinary teams delivering component prevention services. The model is apparently becoming popular in the U.S., with about 20 hospital-based centers currently implementing this strategy in an effort to reduce violence in communities.

Participants also talked about the nature of change in communities and how it seems that communities must express, in some way, a readiness to change to reduce problems like firearms violence. Evaluations like PSN show that dynamic relationships in communities are related to program implementation and to intervention outcomes. There was much discussion around community readiness for change and implementation of interventions to reduce problems like gun violence. There was general agreement about the need for further research on dynamics and conditions for change in communities, including community organizing and preparing communities for change.

There was also discussion regarding the "black-box" methodology typically used in trying to evaluate these interventions and the need for greater use of qualitative and mixed methods to identify adequately the reasons for results coming from multiple component programs and complex interventions. Each aspect of programs or strategies should be described and measured as implemented throughout the process of instigating these interventions to completion of programs and longitudinal follow-up. It was suggested that research in criminal justice needs to borrow methods from other disciplines in measuring implementation processes and other dynamics associated with community interventions.

The Chicago Cease Fire program and the Pittsburgh One Vision program were discussed as non-criminal justice interventions with mixed results. Both programs deployed non-criminal justice staff to intervene in situations that appear likely to result in violence. Where the Chicago program was able to demonstrate effects in multiple locations, the Pittsburgh program suffered implementation and research design problems that may have contributed to null findings.

Participants discussed how non-criminal justice interventions in other areas such as health, nutrition and recreation also appear to have an impact on violence in communities. Many of these efforts are being combined to target multiple outcomes. There seem to be general consensus that non-criminal justice, community and preventive interventions are worthy of further study in relationship to firearms violence (as further discussed later in the meeting).

There was also general agreement that criminal justice research on hot spots and place-based interventions should continue, but research designs and methods should be improved to include measurement of program components, implementation processes and mechanisms related to explaining outcomes, and discounting alternative explanations for program effects. There also is a need to assess the sustainability of these interventions once a demonstration is over and project funding has come to an end. Suggestions for further intervention and policy research ranged from gun courts and other sentencing options to focusing scarce resources on high-risk individuals and

distinct types of firearms violence, and demonstrating outcomes related to community violence prevention and reduction. There also were suggestions for better research to understand community dynamics and climates, and optimal ways of approaching communities in the process of preparing for and sustaining change.

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Public Health Interventions — David Hemenway

[View David Hemenway's Slides](#)

Dr. Hemenway from the Injury Control Research Center and the Youth Violence Prevention Center at Harvard University noted that no one on the 2005 NRC Firearms and Violence panel was an injury-control professional and few worked directly in public health. He suggested that the inclusion of a public health representative may have served to broaden the scope of the report and recommendations resulting from the study.

Dr. Hemenway suggested that a public health perspective is important because it focuses on assets as well as liabilities in communities. He said that a public health perspective includes intervention through prevention (what can you do before crime), through a proactive (versus reactive) approach involving the community, with no assessment of fault or blame, and a systems perspective to preventing problems like firearms violence in the first place.

He provided an example in the decline of auto fatalities. Traffic deaths are often the result of deliberate unlawful behavior by drivers (speeding, reckless driving, drunk driving). He said that over time policy responses to the problem were implemented through law enforcement and public health attention to cars, roads and drivers. He suggested that a combination of these types of factors has resulted in a 90-percent reduction in traffic fatalities over time. Dr. Hemenway stressed that public health brings together a wide array of interests in targeting social problems and norms related to problems like auto fatalities and firearms violence.

He then provided examples of how public health data systems have helped us understand problems like firearms violence. Using data from data collections like the National Violent Death Reporting System and other local surveys, we now know that most victims of firearms violence are younger than 15 years and are often unintentionally shot by a sibling or other acquaintance. As it relates to violence, a local survey in Boston has shown a relationship between hours of sleep and aggression among youth. and that schools with earlier start times appear to have more aggression as well. These kinds of facts help us to understand problems like firearms violence and develop preventive solutions. He then talked about his book, *While We Were Sleeping*, which provides further examples of public health success stories.

Dr. Hemenway then discussed research concerning firearms-related suicides and defensive use of firearms with implications for prevention. He said research suggests a positive relationship between gun ownership and suicide, and a number of facts indicate preventive interventions may be needed. For instance, although suicide attempts with firearms are most lethal compared to other means, risk of substitution in suicide is very small. Evidence shows that suicide is often impulsive and risks are often transitory. Of near-lethal suicide attempts, 70 percent of individuals contemplated doing it for less than an hour, and fewer than 10 percent attempted it again. Facts like these suggest possible prevention strategies such as means restriction.

He provided examples of a primary prevention program called the Harvard [Means Matter Campaign](#), which is an Internet-based program targeting state health departments. Information for prevention is provided. For instance, if young people are depressed, removing guns from the home is encouraged. ED-SAFE is another prevention model that involves some means-restriction interventions including emergency and trauma departments in addition to schools. Another initiative involves meeting with gunshop owners to find ways they can reduce risk for suicide.

Dr. Hemenway talked about the need for more research and data regarding self-defensive gun use. There is little recent research in this area beyond what we already know about guns reducing both physical harm and monetary loss in self-defense situations, and that running away or hiding are better strategies than calling the police. In terms of property loss, having a gun seems to be effective. Some survey results suggest, however, most uses are viewed as socially undesirable, especially hostile gun displays, and many are illegal.

Public Health – Discussion

Working group participants discussed issues, questions and gaps related to public health and prevention, firearms and violence research. Most discussion reflected a general consensus regarding the need for more basic information to better describe gun violence incidents of all kinds. Basic descriptive information is generally lacking from which interventions could be effectively developed and tested within and outside the criminal justice system. There was an expressed need for further research on right-to-carry laws and their progeny, the effect on acquisition of permits and who is carrying weapons. Also needed is more research on self-defense policies (stand-your-ground and castle laws), what constitutes a threat and how it relates to firearms violence. It was suggested that the current variety of related policies and statutes being enacted and implemented across the United States may provide an ongoing policy experiment that should be studied.

Working group participants also identified the need for more research regarding perceptions the general public has about the relationship between firearms and violence and the reality of the relationship between firearms use and violence. For instance, it may be useful to closely examine or review a group of incidents such as nonintentional gun accidents, defensive uses and aggravated assaults to learn more about the dynamics of these situations. It would be useful to examine further highest risk demography (such as children under the age of 15) within public health approaches to prevention of firearms homicide. It may be helpful to disaggregate gun crimes and study individual crimes such as domestic assault, armed robbery and aggravated assault/homicide with a gun.

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Day Two – December 1, 2011

Dr. Wellford noted that day two was to include a discussion of gun markets research by Dr. Anthony Braga; Dr. Braga, however, was unfortunately taken ill at the last minute and could not attend. He said that Dr. Jonathon Caulkins volunteered to provide some thoughts for discussion based upon his research with drug markets, and Agent Charles Houser agreed to talk briefly about firearms tracing at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

Dr. Caulkins said that some generalization is possible between research in the areas of drugs and firearms markets. Many aspects of current firearms markets research are parallel, including such things as categories of access, trafficking and other sources of illegal guns such as theft. He said that it is interesting to note, for instance, that a third of all guns used in homicide are acquired illegally. Dr. Caulkins believes that the market perspective is valuable in the field of firearms and

violence research. His own work in drug markets illustrates the value of monitoring aspects like price, for example, when studying any illicit market. He warned that firearms are durable goods and looking at simple and isolated variables such as quantity probably biases what can be learned from such research. Dr. Caulkins suggests firearms research needs to provide a more complete picture or description of transactions including chain of supply and life cycle. He suggests it may be more productive to study the issue prospectively rather than retrospectively. More research is needed to describe the life cycle of firearm ownership as well as life cycle of the firearm. More aspects such as inventory, turnover and history also need to be measured to better describe markets. Dr. Caulkins suggested that greater differentiation is needed regarding types of crimes committed with guns as well as the many types of situations in which firearms are used.

Special Agent Charles Houser briefly discussed gun tracing by ATF. As chief of the division, Special Agent Houser oversees a program implemented in 1988, which has grown from 48,000 tracing requests in the first year to more than 300,000 last year. Tracing data are added value to an investigation providing links between suspects and crimes. Tracing increasingly contributes to investigations concerning trafficking and illicit distribution of firearms worldwide. Computerization has contributed greatly to the program, and the process recently has become more efficient in converting to an Internet-based information system.

Special Agent Houser said ATF receives about 1,400 tracing requests every day, although there are still problems presented in current tracing technology. For instance, misidentification of weapons still remains a basic problem. A serial number alone is not a unique identifier of a firearm. Other identifiers are necessary, and most failed submissions are because the firearm has not been adequately identified. He said that an Internet-based system has increased data availability and further sharing of information among law enforcement agencies engaged in criminal investigations. Research on markets, supply and demand is very useful in practice, and further research is needed as firearms are related to violence in many ways all over the world.

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Emerging Issues in Methods and Data Collection — John Pepper

Dr. John Pepper from the University of Virginia provided brief comments regarding the working group discussion related to emerging issues concerning methods and data collection. Lack of good data continues to be the biggest problem in research on firearms violence, as it is in much of criminal justice research. Separate issues involve whether needed research can be productive given current methodologies, and what methodological issues need to be addressed. But, the biggest problem area seems to be the lack of valid and reliable data. He suggested we address how to feasibly acquire and provide the necessary resources to collect better data. He suggested that more research on perceptions of the relationship between firearms use and violence may be useful, as would data on implementation, how different regulations are enforced, and how the criminal justice system implements laws and regulations related to firearms. Mixed-methods research on perceptions about firearms and implementation may go a long way to help us better describe processes and dynamic systems involved in firearms violence.

Dr. Pepper said that further use of ecological studies may be of limited utility and suggested that it may be more useful to promote case-control studies that particularly attend to issues of validity. Lastly, he said much more is needed in the development of theory about firearms use and violence. In a world of bad data, one option may be to plow forward and come up with answers, but it may be more productive to spend more time developing more theory as we develop better measurements and methodologies.

Discussion ensued regarding firearms markets and tracing systems research, including issues concerning valid and reliable ways of measuring market-based variables such as price, supply and demand, differences and similarities, overlaps between legal and illegal markets, and firearms as currency in drugs and other organized crime. There was general agreement regarding the need for research to look at separate and distinct areas or "silos" of firearms violence like suicide, crime types, crimes of passion versus planned crimes and self-defensive use.

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Firearms & Violence Research Working Group Meeting Agenda

Day One: Wednesday, November 30, 2011

9:00-9:15 a.m.: Welcome and Introductions — Charles Wellford

9:15-9:30 a.m.: Opening Remarks — John Laub

9:30-10:00 a.m.: Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review — Charles Wellford

10:00-10:30 a.m.: Break

10:30-11:30 a.m.: Criminal Justice Interventions: Research and Discussion — Ed McGarrell

11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m.: Lunch

1:00-2:00 p.m.: Criminal Justice Interventions: Identification of Research Issues, Questions and Gaps

2:00-3:00 p.m.: Public Health and Prevention Theory in Firearms: Research and Discussion — David Hemenway

3:00-3:30 p.m.: Break

3:30-4:30 p.m.: Prevention Theory: Identification of Research Issues, Questions and Gaps

Day Two: Thursday, December 1, 2011

9:00-9:30 a.m.: Recap Day One — Charles Wellford

9:30-10:30 a.m.: Emerging Issues in Research Methods and Data Collection — John Pepper

10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.: Discussion, Summary, Next Steps and Farewells

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Working Group Participants

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Rose Cheney

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Notes

[1] Consistent with the theme of the National Research Council's report on firearms and violence (Wellford, Petrie and Pepper, 2005), the working group's analysis of research needs recognized the limits articulated in the Supreme Court's Heller decision (554 U.S. 570, 2008). Nothing in the working group's discussion or in its analysis of research needs requires or anticipates any changes in the current interpretation of the meaning of the Second Amendment for reducing gun-related crime. Each of the topics discussed below is consistent with the individual right to possess firearms that has been articulated by the Court.

[2] National Research Council, *Strengthening the National Institute of Justice*, Committee on Assessing the Research Program of the National Institute of Justice, C.F. Wellford, B.M. Chemers,

and J.A. Schuck, Editors, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2010.

[3] National Research Council, *Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review*, Committee to Improve Research Information and Data on Firearms, Charles F. Wellford, John V. Pepper, and Carol V. Petrie, editors, Committee on Law and Justice, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2005.

[4] National Research Council, *Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review*, Committee to Improve Research Information and Data on Firearms, Charles F. Wellford, John V. Pepper, and Carol V. Petrie, editors, Committee on Law and Justice, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2005.

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