Friday, October 28

2022 NNIP DC Meeting

Session Title: Redefining Public Safety

Room: Brookland

Led by: Caroline Bhalla and Caroline Issacs

Notes by: Kathy Pettit

Present: Caroline Bhalla (Los Angeles), Seema Iyer (Baltimore), Cheryl Knott (Baltimore), Caroline Issacs (Tucson), Lamar Gardere (New Orleans), Ian Grice (National League of Cities), Alyssa Kogan (Boston), Pablo Castro (Microsoft), Andrew Carr (New Haven), Amy Rohan (Milwaukee)

**Resources**

* LA: [NDSC Criminal Justice Data Initiative: Year 1 Wrap Report - Price Center for Social Innovation (usc.edu)](https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/ndsccrimejusticereport/)
* NLC: [Reimagining Public Safety: A Toolkit For Cities and Towns - National League of Cities (nlc.org)](https://www.nlc.org/resource/reimagining-public-safety-a-toolkit-for-cities-and-towns/)
* Tucson: [The Barrio Centro Community Safety Participatory Research Project Report (2021)](https://afscarizona.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Barrio-Centro-Report.pdf)
* Tucson: [Blog: Reimagining Public Safety in Tucson, Arizona (2022)](https://www.urban.org/catalyst-grant-program-insights/reimagining-public-safety-tucson-arizona)
* [Tucson Power BI dashboard](eyJrIjoiYTU5ZTQ3Y2YtNGE3ZS00ODc5LTg5NGMtZDE0ZWM0ODUwMDE4IiwidCI6IjY5YjA4YTI3LWZlYmQtNDQwNC1iY2YwLTllNGY3OGE3ZTI2MSIsImMiOjZ9)

Caroline B - We held listening sessions to ask neighborhood nonprofits on our steering committee how they defined safety. There was so much we couldn’t measure – knowing your neighbors, not having trash in your neighborhood, being able to walk safely to your car. The answers were mostly about social connectively. We did listening sessions – separate for community and police. (We tried 1 with community and police together and it didn’t work well.) We took LAPD data covering LA city to look at it by race/ethnicity/location: calls for service and stops and arrests (defined as citizen-initiated contact and police-initiated contact). Black folks are stopped 3 times more than white counterparts. But also a lot of people are calling the police. After George Floyd’s murder, our students and staff were protesting in the streets, and we had to reckon with the fact that we had partnered with the LAPD. It was a lot to process. We shared the data with a strong nonprofit group Community Coalition (CoCo) in hopes they would use it for advocacy. We wanted to update the numbers after COVID – all activity went down by 40%. Racial disparities were the same, but more Latinx people being stopped (possibly because they represent more essential workers who were not able to quarantine at home.)

Caroline B – We used data from the open data portal in LA – they update it with crime and stops data frequently.

We think people are calling the police because there is no one out to call. We have 60K people living outside in LA. Lots of people calling the people to report people experiencing homelessness. That will need a lot more resources. It is coded language and doesn’t record race-ethnicity in the same way.

Cheryl – we just recently started getting demographic data for Part 1 data in Baltimore. Once it was shared through the open data portal, they masked location information and people’s characteristics. They are expanding upon types of weapons.

Kathy – how did people react to the quantitative data when they wanted qualitative pieces?

Caroline B – They understood. The most common words they used were protection, community. When we talk about the data, we have to remember that people may have been harmed by the police or police contact.

Lamar – we have a lot of open police data in NOLA. They are miscoding race/ethnicity – especially as it relates to Hispanic folks (either intentionally or unintentionally). Their coding skews the number of people who are white higher, which ends up reducing disparities.

Seema – it is like that in Maryland – black-white-other.

Caroline – we looked at it with police.

Alyssa – How did you learn how to speak about it – how do you recruit?

Caroline – with trusted partners. CoCo is busy. We have a steering committee of 30-40 organizations. NDSC founded by a community process. They help us decide what data to use, include, etc. Because we meet with them regularly, we have trusted partners in place.

Caroline I – Tucson is progressive in the conservative state of AZ. Leadership is majority Democratic. After high-profile murders, everyone looks at the mayor. And he puts together racial equity task force. As an advocate, I have an idea and we sell our project – asked to expand the project to help mayor make decisions and get credit for getting community input. Grace is now at Boston University. We are talking with the city, and we start getting interesting responses. And we proposed to make a presentation to city council. But it is for the community, not for the city govt. We want to keep the relationships strong. The point is to be able to recommend to “fund this.” We ran a ballot initiative. The dispensary firms want to make a ballot initiative 207 - a drug reform package – includes funding an expungement process + justice reinvestment. Trying to replicate laws from Colorado – they put funding from the police into a community grant program run by a Latino group. They fund grassroots people doing real work.

$17 million dollars – 1 of the first 3 disbursements. But how will it get disbursed? Now community folks need to advocate for themselves. State public health dept is running the program but have a lot on their plate. It’s an interesting opportunity – it is new $, not taking from anyone and anywhere.

Seema –We are the Michael Brown/Freddy Gray wave in 2015. In 2018/2019, we were doing house parties – the kinds of things people want to know are how many beat cops, how many police vehicles are in my neighborhood every day? How do we unlock that data? In general, in terms of redefining public safety – it is neighborhood specific. One of our commissioners say, for two beat cops in two neighborhoods – 1 with lots of vacant housing and 1 with homeownership – they will have 2 different cops at the end of the year. They have different types of crime. In neighborhood with the kinds of crime, aggravated assault, the perpetrator and victim know each other – retribution, self-justice. In downtown, burglaries, robberies, perpetrator-victim don’t know each other, and these are more likely to be reported. Disaggregating by the kind of crime is important. And the volume of crime, big increases in robberies/burglaries after Freddy Gray. Different reason for the crime to happen, so the data can inform different kinds of responses. You are much more likely to be a victim of burglary than shooting. Commissioner didn’t have a strategy.

Caroline – Our partner is Safe Communities Institute that has been around a long time. There’s a type of police called Metro division in South LA. It looks like the military – big armed vehicles. The numbers of police-initiated contact were off the charts. Community coalitions got them shut down – the metro division were downsized in 2019. They re-allocated $90 million to community groups.

Seema – Baltimore – we used open checkbook but no location information on it. We have a student looking at it, we know what they spend on. Trying to use Open Refine to clean the data. Budget information tends not to have location information.

Caroline – We have a group Citizens United for Responsible Budgeting (CURB).

Lamar – we might be able to get the work orders – but very labor-intensive

Seema – we don’t want the criminal justice experts telling us about neighborhoods. They say more blue light cameras. We have a man Daniel Webster – expert in gun violence but wants to create “Safe Streets” /violence interrupters. You have now created a separate system with separate bureaucracy and the community doesn’t know who to trust. It works for the first year or two, but just like any antidote, it goes back to the same level of homicides after that. You should be able to graduate out of Safe Streets and have the community deal with conflict.

Amy – policing looks so different in different neighborhoods. There is 1 neighborhood in Milwaukee where the perception of police was horrible. But they introduced bike cops, & there is more of connection than police in cars. Then people wanted to see more police. But may not work in all neighborhoods.

Seema = on the Tucson Power BI site, you can do searches by ward. Have you been arrested by the police? Ward 3 jumped out. Your survey will point to a different solution.

Caroline I – you need to ask if there another option than more police.

Seema – how do you want to make your neighborhood better?

Lamar – we have a manpower issue – maybe people don’t want to be police anymore. NOPD has surplus every year because they can’t hire. The public doesn’t know how much money gets left on the table.

Caroline I – you should ask what are existing viable projects? It is neighborhood specific. What is already there that is working? The example we love to use – in the first qualitative study, we learned about Flowers and Bullets – founded by Latinx young adults. The city of Tucson closed their elementary schools and they got to lease the land and put a farm on the school land. It was the hub of the community – holding ESL classes for example. They are doing water harvesting workshop and supporting alternative economic paths. Like harvesting prickly pear and make syrup and sell in the farmer’s market. Parents dropped their kids off there when they couldn’t afford summer camp. They don’t call it “reentry”, but they have people coming out of prison, doing their community service hours. It is a place where people come and have agreements with the local street organizations.

Alyssa – it is interesting for me – how do we frame community safety? It has been a hot topic, but we are funded by municipalities we serve (many of them are white, not progressive). In 2020, we released 50-year regional plan – one component was called public safety. Alot of the language used was not viewed favorably by MAPC staff. Where were our loyalties – police v public. I know it is an issue in Boston, but the interest is there with staff. What kind of data can we use that addresses public safety issues without crime data and reframe to asset driven approach. Data that says, “here are things that people view as enhancement to their community.”

Caroline I – Grace would say – what do rich communities have? Green spaces, public art, community events, etc. not cops. The interpretation is that those places have no crime.

Seema – I’m a believer in collective efficacy. It explains variations in safety. We asked in Data Day – what do you do to improve your neighborhood? We heard one answer “We plant trees.” Can we get at tactical things like that?

Ian – this is the work that I do – reimagining community safety – NLC does budget analysis - mostly look at funding coming in, but could be a resource for spending. 50% of people killed by the police have mental illness; civilian response, co-response saves the city money. We are looking at ideas like vacant building reduction, increasing green space and limiting police reactions on the front-end. We are looking into the community and saying – how many parks, open space. Cities are doing analysis on people being arrested (public health work) – how do you reach people before a confrontation happens? We work with mayor’s office or city manager’s office or Offices of Violence Prevention. We have [a toolkit – reimagining public safety](https://www.nlc.org/resource/reimagining-public-safety-a-toolkit-for-cities-and-towns/). We are funding the alternative response through Wells Fargo in Dallas, St. Louis, Philadelphia, Baltimore, & Jackson, MS.