Building Community Safety with Community Resources

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JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION CENTER

www.JohnJayREC.nyc

If law enforcement were the only thing keeping communities safe, we would see it...

… The safest places would be those with the strongest police presence.

Communities are safe mainly due to their own resources and characteristics.

But... What resources? Which characteristics?

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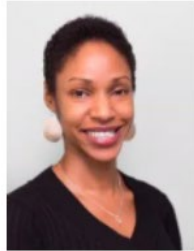Mailman School of Public Health
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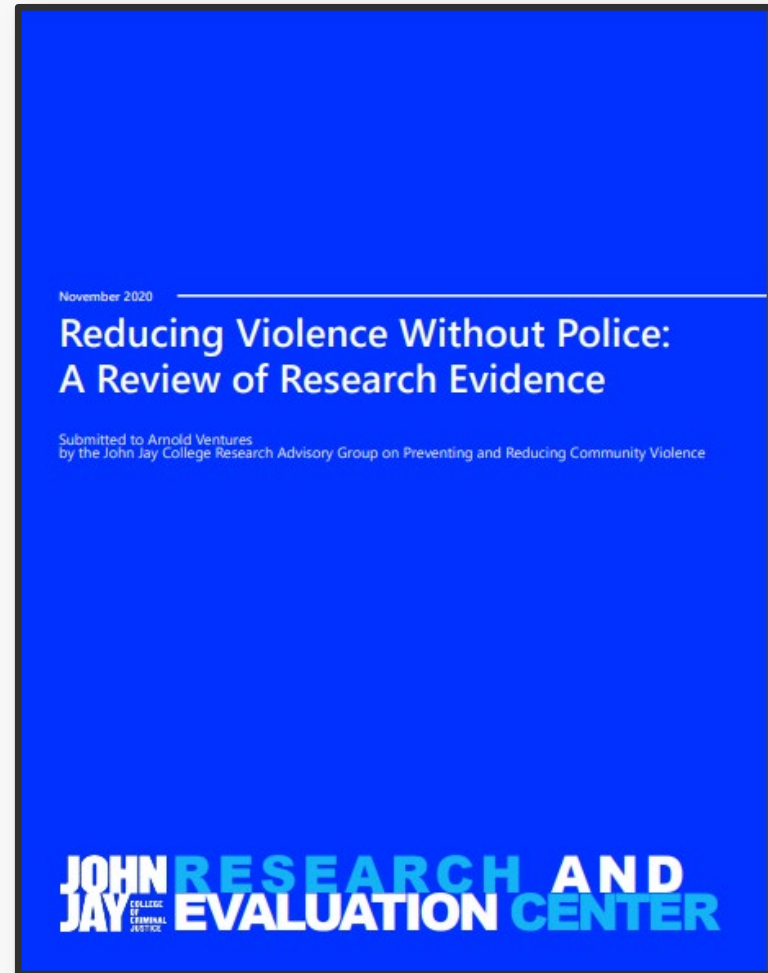
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Arnold Ventures asked John Jay College to review research literature about factors related to levels of community violence.

We only considered high-quality, reliable studies of community resources and characteristics that were statistically related to crime and violence.

And only things that would be feasible and practical for a community while not relying on law enforcement.

November 2020

Reducing Violence Without Police: A Review of Research Evidence

Submitted to Arnold Ventures
by the John Jay College Research Advisory Group on Preventing and Reducing Community Violence

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See the report at:
JohnJayREC.nyc

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We identified 7 evidence-backed strategies...

1. Improve the Physical Environment

2. Strengthen Anti-Violence Social Norms and Peer Relationships

3. Engage and Support Youth

4. Reduce Substance Abuse

5. Mitigate Financial Stress

6. Reduce the Harmful Effects of the Justice Process

7. Confront the Gun Problem

Increasing the prevalence of green space in a neighborhood, improving the quality of buildings and housing, and creating public spaces with ample lighting suitable for pedestrian traffic can be cost-effective ways of decreasing community violence.

Place-based interventions that are structural, scalable, and sustainable have been shown to reduce violence and many strategies are economically viable.

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Violence spreads through social norms, peer networks, and interpersonal relationships.

Programs such as Cure Violence and Advance Peace rely on community-based workers to form supportive and confidential relationships with individuals at the highest risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence.

Connecting people with social resources and working to shift their behavior and attitudes can help reduce neighborhood violence.

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Any serious effort to reduce violence must involve a special focus on youth and young adults.

Effective strategies sometimes involve individualized, therapeutic interventions, but others focused on work and school alone show cost-efficient reductions in violence.

Youth employment, job mentorship, and educational support can improve youth outcomes and reduce violence.

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Numerous studies show that interventions to reduce harmful substance abuse are associated with lower rates of community violence.

Some, but not all strategies involve drug treatment.

Policies to enforce age limits on alcohol access and restrict alcohol sales in certain areas or during specific times have been shown to decrease violent crime.

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Financial stability and economic opportunities help to reduce crime.

Short-term assistance, especially when coupled with behavioral therapy programs, appears to affect rates of violence and the timing of financial aid plays a role in community safety.

People experiencing negative income shocks are less inclined to behave violently when they receive timely financial assistance.

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The justice/legal process must be viewed as legitimate for community members to engage effectively with police and other justice actors to prevent violence.

Research suggests that community safety is supported when justice systems operate with transparency, openness, consistency, and trust, and when police departments address complaints from the community.

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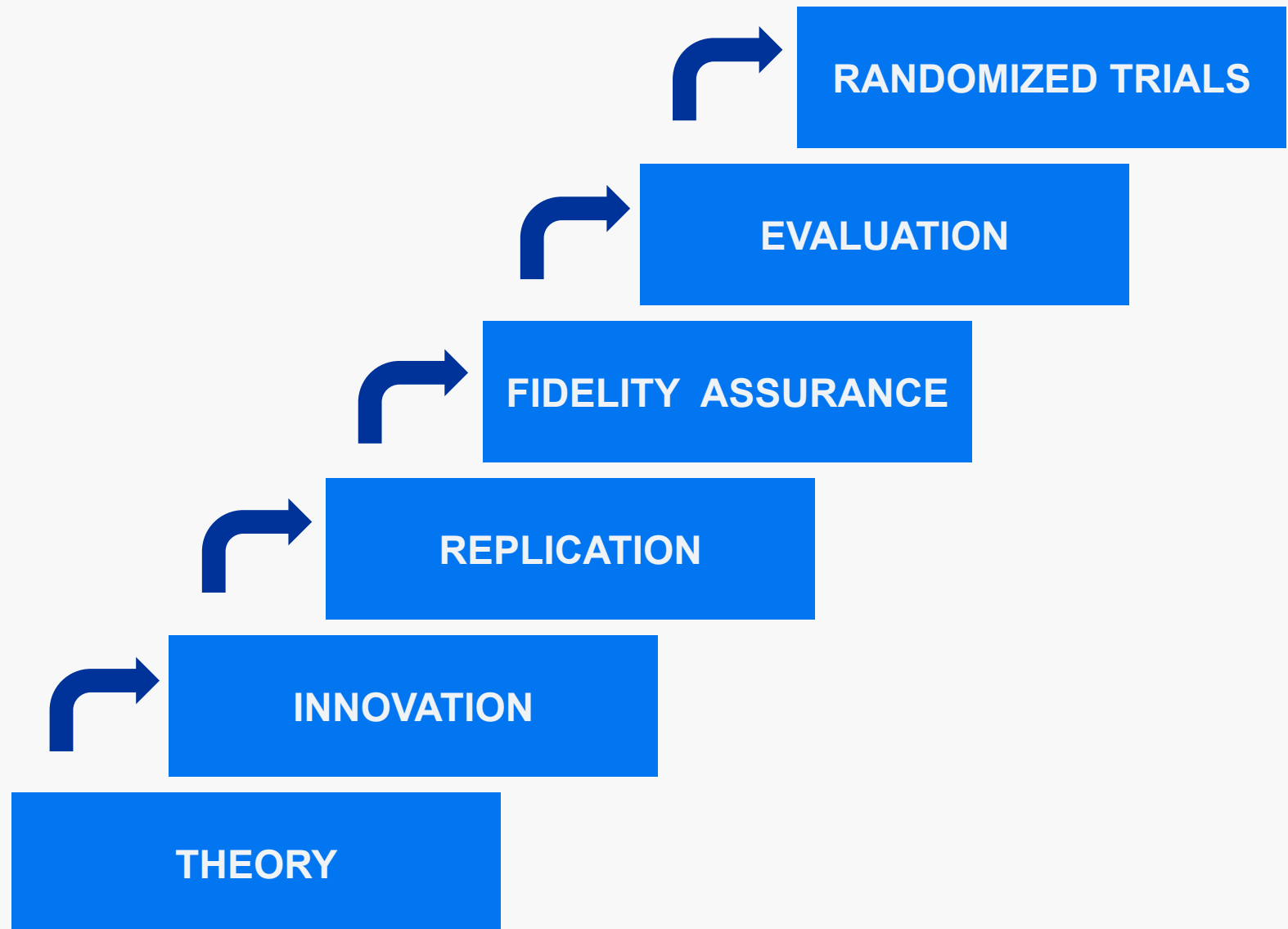Violence is lower when policy mechanisms effectively:

- limit access to guns,

- increase gun restrictions for individuals with violent crime backgrounds,

- reduce access to guns among young people,

- impose longer waiting periods to obtain guns, and

- increase training required to obtain and possess firearms.

Cause and Effect

Evaluation research is essential, not only to measure an outcome but to test whether a change in outcome may be reasonably attributed to a program or policy:

- **Outcome** is the status of an outcome at some point in time
     (e.g., number of shootings in a neighborhood)

- **Change** is the difference in that outcome over time
     (e.g., shootings declined by 20% in the program area...)

- **Effect** is the portion of a change that can be attributed to a program or policy
     (e.g., …while shootings in a well-matched comparison
      neighborhood declined by only 6%)

Pathway to Model Development

RANDOMIZED TRIALS

EVALUATION

FIDELITY ASSURANCE

REPLICATION

INNOVATION

THEORY

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