

Preface

This volume grew out of a symposium organized in Jerusalem and funded primarily by the Academic Study Group (ASG) of the UK. The ASG brings together UK scholars and Israeli scholars to advance scientific endeavors in a variety of fields. David Farrington was originally approached by the ASG, and he then contacted David Weisburd about the possibility of organizing a meeting focused around what we know about what works in preventing crime. After a series of discussions with John Levy of the ASG, the topic of “what we have learned from systematic reviews” was finalized. Because we wanted to bring together a broader range of scholars, we also solicited and received support from the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University, the Jerry Lee Centre of Experimental Criminology at Cambridge University, and the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University. The Hebrew University also supported the symposium itself, which was held at its Faculty of Law in April 2012. We are very grateful to John Levy for his support of our meeting and his patience in our development of this volume.

The main aim of the symposium was to review what has been learned about the effectiveness of criminological interventions from systematic reviews. Such reviews, pioneered in medicine by the Cochrane Collaboration and in social sciences by the Campbell Collaboration, are relatively recent. Unlike the more traditional narrative reviews, they have explicit objectives, give full details about all sources searched and all searches conducted, try to obtain all potentially relevant evaluation reports (whether published or not), have explicit criteria for including or excluding studies, and focus on studies with the highest methodological quality. There has been no previous effort to summarize what has been learned from systematic reviews in criminology. We were pleased at the outset that Katherine Chabalko, the criminology editor at Springer, was as excited as we were about the possible products of our meeting and offered us early on a contract to publish this work with Springer. Katie was supportive throughout, and we very much appreciate her work on this volume as well as that of Hana Nagdimov, Springer’s editorial assistant.

The symposium was extremely useful in allowing all participants to hear and comment on all papers. This was valuable in encouraging uniformity in the style of each paper and in avoiding repetition. It was decided that all chapters should include a systematic search and should include a forest graph of odds ratios from all

included systematic reviews. It was also decided that chapters should conclude by addressing the following questions: What works? What is promising? What seems to have no effect? What is harmful? What is uncertain? What is missing?

The conference participants included seven from the UK, five from the USA, and twelve from Israel (supplemented by others from Hebrew University who sat in on sessions). We think that the symposium and subsequently this volume have led to an important contribution to advancing the knowledge base about what works in crime prevention and rehabilitation. Indeed, as readers will see, it provides a remarkable contrast to the negative assumptions regarding these interventions that were prevalent just three decades ago. We also think that this effort has helped to advance cooperation between UK and Israeli scientists, which is a major goal of the ASG, which was the primary funder of our efforts.

Finally, we are extremely grateful to Alese Wooditch, graduate research assistant in the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy at George Mason University, who provided substantial analytic and editorial assistance during the preparation of this volume.

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