#87 (JEREMY WILSON)

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Reducing crime features conversations with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers. Jeremy Wilson is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice and the founding director of the Police Staffing Observatory at Michigan State University. We talk police recruitment, what is wrong with so many operational allocation models, and how the world of police staffing is changing.

I am your host Jerry Ratcliffe, and you are listening to the Reducing Crime Podcast. Speaking of things Reducing Crime, did you know that if you're on Instagram, you can get short 90 second snippets of interesting research and policing tidbits? Yeah. A new one drops every few days, so head on over to the Insta thingy and look up reducing crime. That's reducingcrime_. All one word followed by an underscore. Okay. Have you done that? Good.

Now, earlier this year, the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing held their ninth annual conference in Tucson, Arizona. So I grabbed a chance while there to chat with Jeremy Wilson. Jeremy is a professor in the School of Criminal Justice and the founding director of the Police Staffing Observatory at Michigan State University. Before that, he was a behavioral scientist at the Rand Corporation where he led the development of the Center on Quality Policing and the police recruitment and retention clearing house. He's an incredibly productive scholar, having written over 180 publications and attracted more than $15 million of sponsored projects. He serves on the National Policing Institute Board of Directors, the IACP, that's International Association of Chiefs of Police Research Advisory Committee, and the editorial board of the Journal of Economic Criminology. He was named a distinguished scholar by the American Society of Criminology's Division on Policing and the police section of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences honored him with the very prestigious OW Wilson Award. Other than being rudely interrupted by the Air Force at one point, we chat about staff allocation models and what police departments need to do to better understand their perpetual staffing crises. As the episode starts, you get to hear that Jeremy is also knowledgeable about cactus or cactus's or cacti, I don't know the plural of that. Still don't.

You got in okay?

Jeremy Wilson:

Yeah. Yeah, it was no problem at all. I loved getting in and seeing the palm trees, but especially those Saguaro cactuses, cacti cactuses.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I don't know the cactus misses. I don't know what they are. I just know they look like this. I'm so uneducated. Yeah, I've only ever seen those in westerns.

Jeremy Wilson:

They're beautiful. They inspire me. I know there's a Saguaro National Park that's near here. I've been trying to get to go hike and I think it'd just be amazing just to go out wandering around those and get beyond just the Looney Tunes of the cacti world.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm not sure about the hiking. I mean, it's what the 1st of May and it's already hotter than the surface of the sun. I don't know how anybody lives here. I mean, you're from Michigan. This must be like a big shock.

Jeremy Wilson:

Oh yeah. I love it. But it's a dry heat though.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, don't give me that old dry heat bullshit. It's still fucking hot. You're not originally from Michigan though, are you?

Jeremy Wilson:

No. Ohio originally. Yeah, Toledo area, but I've moved all over the country.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So what's been your pathway into academia?

Jeremy Wilson:

I think a lot of people, I didn't really know what I wanted to do when I was going to school, and I think I really kind of found myself when I was doing my graduate work at Indiana University. There was a professor there, Alex Weiss, who is a really big influence on me, and I was able to start working with him and it was really kind of fascinating. I thought, well, I'm going to go into law enforcement in some respects like everyone else. Oh yeah, federal law enforcement.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You thought about being a cop.

Jeremy Wilson:

Yeah, yeah, for sure. Most people, I guess studying criminal justice. But a couple of things happened. One was I was interested in organized crime

Jerry Ratcliffe:

As a study.

Jeremy Wilson:

A study or not to participate. Good. To clarify

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That, well, if you participate, there's way more money. I hear

Jeremy Wilson:

That's true. That's true. There was this conference on organized crime in Chicago.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It seems like a good place to have a conference on organized crime.

Jeremy Wilson:

Yeah, exactly. And so I went out to dinner with all these cops from FBI and local agencies and all this stuff, and I'm just absorbing. And they just sat there bitching about their jobs. They hated it, the bureaucracy. This was difficult. That was difficult. And I thought, gosh, that doesn't sound like much fun.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But if you've ever been drinking with academics, it's no different.

Jeremy Wilson:

That's true. Oh yeah. Again, this is at the time, little did I know going into academia that that would be even more political. Oh, bureaucratic.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And as I tell people, the battles are so bitter in academia because the stakes are so low.

Jeremy Wilson:

Oh, exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Never has so much been fought in for so little. But then shortly thereafter, I was working with Alex and he had a project with the Indianapolis Police Department, and they were implementing their IMAP program, which was their version of CompStat. I got exposed to field research working with him, and I got to see him interact with this large agency and how he was able to really have a big influence on their operations. Even sitting in these meetings where the chief basically leans over and says, okay, what should I say now?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, he really was a unicorn then because not many people have that kind of Absolutely. People like Anthony Braga has had that kind of influence in Boston and Robin Engel in Cincinnati and some other agencies, but not that many people really get that kind of level of influence. That's great.

Jeremy Wilson:

Yeah, absolutely. And so I thought, well, here's a completely different way to work with police agencies where I could be involved in what's happening, but not just one organization, but lots of organizations and maybe not get mired into the bureaucratic that I heard from all these other folks talking about. And so that's what really got me interested in police administration. And so I'd continued on and he suggested that I look into Ohio State, which is where I went to get my PhD because I had a program in public administration. So I got to,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You really wanted to a tour of fly over states, didn't you?

Jeremy Wilson:

Oh I sure did. Yeah. I went really far, Ohio, Indiana, back to Ohio.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Have you ever seen the coastline?

Jeremy Wilson:

I did actually, because I worked at the Rand Corporation.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's California, isn't it?

Jeremy Wilson:

Yep, yep. So I was at in Santa Monica, well, I guess I was only there for a year and then went to Pittsburgh. I got kind of plugged into the big policy game there and got to learn much more about running big projects and that when I went to Ohio State, I was doing a lot of quantitative methods, very sophisticated modeling and thought, okay, you kind of make that a big part of my work. But I found myself in the middle of Kabul, Afghanistan working on a project on rebuilding police and justice institutions and nation building operations and interacting with people who were creating new police recruits from the ground up. They didn't have pencils. They didn't have boots. And what that taught me was that, yes, sophisticated models are great, but sometimes asking the right question is the most important thing you can do. And so a lot of the work I do, at least to me, seems fairly simple or straightforward, but it's asking questions that people aren't asking.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How long did you spend in Kabul working with those guys?

Jeremy Wilson:

Well, it was a couple year project, but our visit there I think was about three weeks.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Having done work in Central America, I don't know what your experience was like, but technology helps. But at a fundamental level, it's still about a police officer going out and talking to people. It's people having relationships. Absolutely. The core of getting the right people in the job who actually want to do the job is as important, if not more important than the numbers,

Jeremy Wilson:

Which is what's interesting because there's been so little research in the staffing area. I mean, it's a fundamental building block of police organizations, but we spend a lot of time talking about strategy and programs and activities and other things, but we don't often talk about the basic building block,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Which is really the area that you've become an expert in now. So your dissertation was on community policing, and so what's the transition from that that's brought you to now running this very successful staffing observatory?

Jeremy Wilson:

Well, if you kind of look over the decades at the different areas I've worked, it's been in areas where police have really struggled. They're facing very difficult challenges and they've had very little evidence or science to guide their decision-making process. And so over time, I've built bodies of work and recruitment, retention, consolidation, gun violence. It's research based on the practical need of the organizations. So a lot of the work, going back to 2008 and before when we had staffing crises that we were dealing with. Now, some of that stuff in 2008

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Sort of circulated around a recession. It did, but I've often wondered if recessions were actually good for police. Certainly recruitment and retention because it's one of the few solid stable jobs around at times when there's a really economic crisis.

Jeremy Wilson:

But before the recession, there was a lot of a shortage and we saw all kinds of interventions and marketing ploys and people recruiting from across the country. But then the recession hit, but then it became more of a selection problems like, okay, everyone wants a job in policing now because it's relatively secure, and so how do we deal with all these applicants? How do we select those that are most suitable for law enforcement over the long term? Then we saw things that we thought we'd never see these cuts to public safety where we saw consolidation and even organizational disbanding.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, Eric Piza did an interesting natural study about Newark and Jersey City police departments who are both struggling around 2008 and one of the managed to survive the crisis without cutting numbers. But the other, I think it was Newark, dropped 13% of the workforce and you saw a direct relationship to this crime went up. He's found increases in property crime and violent crime as a result of Newark having to reduce their workforce. So 2008 was a difficult time across the board, but in sounds in far more complicated ways than people appreciate.

Jeremy Wilson:

But it also brings me to this notion about what is a police crisis? We say we're in a police crisis now, and I see that

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's whenever the mayor calls the chief, whatever it is, that's the crisis, right?

Jeremy Wilson:

And there's a lot of advantages to calling it a crisis, bringing awareness, resources and all that. I'm not saying there's not a crisis, but there's also some implications for calling it a crisis. It kind of glosses over the fact that there's always staffing challenges. It focuses us on, like I said, that allocation level.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So what do you mean when you talk about allocation level?

Jeremy Wilson:

Yeah. Well, when I talk about allocation level, it's more about how many officers and agency needs. When you pick up any newspaper and you can read about an agency is understaffed, Western Police Agency that I was working with. I was in a meeting with the chief and the captain and several of the command staff, and we were talking about the recruitment issues, and the captain spent a good 10, 15 minutes talking about how they were understaffed. They had spent all these efforts in trying to boost their staffing to get back up to that allocation level. And he was so excited and said, and we did it. And so my next question was, well, where'd that come from? Crickets. The air just got sucked out of the room because we all know a lot of allocation levels are, I don't want to say they're pulled out of thin air, but sometimes they don't know where they come from. They're often very divorced from the actual workload of the organization.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, police departments in the west of the United States seem to have far fewer numbers than police departments in on the east coast,

Jeremy Wilson:

Which is another reason why we got to get past these institutional myths. First of all, when agencies are saying they're understaffed, usually it's because of that allocation level. But they're also looking at other factors too, like these

population rates. An agency might consider itself understaffed if it falls under a certain number of officers per thousand people,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But surely it's got to depend on more than that.

Jeremy Wilson:

Absolutely, it

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I mean, I've done work in the past in cities like Camden, New Jersey, when it was the most dangerous city in America, they had less than a hundred thousand people, but the homicide rate was through the roof. You can go to some other cities with a hundred thousand people of dormitory city, and they go into the big city to work, and it's all very peaceful and quiet, and people leave their garages open and nothing gets stolen.

Jeremy Wilson:

Absolutely. That's why those ratios don't make a lot of sense. They tell you nothing about the quality or quantity of policing or the circumstances, the workload, the environment, but we kind of hold onto those. They're easy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Is there a better practice? Is there a good way to, I mean, if we were starting from scratch and creating a fictitious city in the middle of nowhere, is there a sort of good practice model that people could follow to say, this is really how many you need

Jeremy Wilson:

Generally, and the answer may be unsatisfying to a lot of folks. Obviously it's a little more work than looking at a ratio.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

People listen to this podcast. They're used to anything I'm involved in being unsatisfying.

Jeremy Wilson:

Well, the best practice in this space is to do workload and performance-based assessments at the agency level. Try to get a sense of what's the actual workload of the organization.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

In some cities, people pick up the phone for absolutely any bullshit whatsoever because after a long history, that's the only city agency that actually turns up is the police department. In other places, they have far more options, and so the call load seems more manageable.

Jeremy Wilson:

So you can kind of sort through that and say, okay, what are the things that we actually have to respond to? And then you can say, what are our performance objectives? What is it that we want to accomplish? What is it that we want to do? Whether it's community policing, other kind of proactive activities,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Stuff that's not related to response calls.

Jeremy Wilson:

And so you build that into a model and then you can predict the number of officers that would be optimum for that workload and performance objectives. And so obviously you see that's a little bit more work than just looking at a ratio.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Is there a sort of workload balance that you're discovering is optimal?

Jeremy Wilson:

A good question. And agencies often ask about those kind of benchmarks. But again, it goes down to a couple things. Was it the agency wants to do? Some may say, well, we want a third of an officer's time spent on pro activities. Others may say a half. But the other piece is because you can also look at the feasibility of that, you can build a model to help advance a discussion about what's wanted versus what's needed versus what's affordable. Yeah, you say you want 50% time proactive, but it's not going to cost. This is how many officers you're going to need and what that cost is going to be.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How many times have you been shot as the messenger?

Jeremy Wilson:

Well, funny you asked that because what we often find that they turn into larger efficiency studies because you have to look at policy and deployment and work schedules and all these things. And what often finds out is these agencies that really think they're understaffed to say, look, the average officer is responding to 1.8 calls per shift.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Good God, even when I was on foot patrol in the east end of London, if I turned in less than two calls during the day, I'd have been strung up from the nearest lamppost.

Jeremy Wilson:

And so you identify these things, say, okay, yes, you may be understaffed if you keep doing things the way you're doing. So one of the biggest culprits here are work schedules. And again, another topic where I don't make a lot of friends, but agencies and staff are really in favor of these 10 hour work schedules, and they do have a lot of advantages. There's research that supports the many different advantages,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And our joint friend Steve James, who's here at the conference as well, has done sleep studies and exhaustion studies and says, out of all the options, this four 10 hours is the least worst option.

Jeremy Wilson:

So it's good for holiday, all that concept, right? So there are advantages, but from an efficiency standpoint, what you're doing is you're staffing for 30 hours a day instead of 24. So to manage that schedule, you have to have many more staff to put the same number on the street at any one time.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's an optimal model for human physiology, but it causes problems in terms of addressing some of the needs of the agency to be more efficient. But it comes back to this notion that there are possibly no easy answers to any of this. What are you prepared to sacrifice?

Jeremy Wilson:

Precisely. And that's why these methodologies are helpful because you can lay out the options.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You can model this and say, I, well, we can change our worksheet. You can move this little lever and it changes the model and move it back and forward. That's fascinating. Yeah, it really is. I worked with a city that had a few hundred police officers, but they had a massive mayoral protection detail. I mean, just so many officers were working in this, and I'm going, seriously, she's an 80-year-old lady that nobody would recognize in the street and gives a shit about, do you really need this many officers on her protection detail, she had more protection than the British Prime Minister. Wow. It's like, come on.

Jeremy Wilson:

Yeah. We tend to think about just throwing staff at the workload, oh, we need more staff. We need more staff. But there's other ways of managing workload demand, looking at civilianization, other ways of introducing efficiencies like work schedules

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Often seems to be a focus on recruitment. Recruitment. We have to fix recruitment, but a lot of police departments are hemorrhaging people at the other end

Jeremy Wilson:

Think of all the effort that goes into onboarding a new recruit. You have to get them interested, you got to get them trained, and that's very time consuming and costly.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But while we're talking about recruitment, are we asking the right questions? Are we focused on getting the right people in? Because cops nowadays are very different than when I joined three or 4,000 years ago in the neolithic era.

Jeremy Wilson:

When I look at what's being done in recruitment right now, I see focus on a couple of narrow issues. One is strategy. What is it that the organization is doing to bring people in, whether it's marketing, hiring, bonuses, those sorts of things. But when it comes to recruitment, there's so much more than just the strategy. There are dimensions at the organization, unit and individual level, like leadership, culture, funding, performance metrics, training of recruiters, incentivizing them. There's so much more, but we only focus on that one aspect of strategy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

This is probably blowing the minds of people whose job is probably tuned in to think, ah, I'll just learn a few tips about recruitment. Where's a starting point for somebody to start in an agency to wrap their head around this?

Jeremy Wilson:

I think the first most important point is to figure out what's the workload? How much staff does that take? So take the people out of it and just look at what the department is required to do. And that has nothing to do with how many staff and agency currently has. Ignore that number and let's just look at the core work. Ignore that number, think about what your performance objectives are, and then start building out, okay, here's sort of our optimum workforce, and then take a look at where are we compared to where we need to go. And then build strategy to get you to that ideal workforce while evaluating along the way. So they become more evidence-based, such as understanding the nature of their problem. Why are people leaving the organization? Is this a compensation issue? Is there some kind of a management problem? Where are we losing people? Where isn't there a management problem? Right? Isn, right? Yeah. We know people quit bosses, right? They don't quit jobs. Having a turnover problem of folks at the senior level because they're getting toward retirement, is much different than having a major turnover problem within the first couple of years of service

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Where people are particularly productive, especially at frontline policing,

Jeremy Wilson:

Right? Or if it's in the academy, for example.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So even if you're understaffed, you may not have a recruitment problem.

Jeremy Wilson:

Yes. Which is again a reason why to look at this from a systems perspective, because all these different factors interact. Good news about that is if you have a problem in one area, you may be able to mitigate it in another, but then

also problems in one area. If you have a problem in leadership, that could lead to problems in other areas like culture, which could then lead to turnover.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

This isn't so much opening a can of worms at this point. It sounds like you're just opening a can and then you're building a worm factory

Jeremy Wilson:

A little bit. A little bit. Because all these different pieces interact, but we tend to look at them in isolated ways.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, because we set up separate staff. There'll be staff that run the academy. There'll be separate staff that recruitment, there'll be other staff that if anybody ever thinks about it, do the exit interviews. If anybody really cares why people are leaving, and that's often all housed in different parts of the police department.

Jeremy Wilson:

It is. Agencies often don't have experiences or resources to look at things holistically. That's in part why I think researcher practitioner partnerships can be very helpful.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Some of the work you've done as a researcher practitioner partnership has been around retention as well. That seems an understudied area. What have you learned from that? Has anything surprised you?

Jeremy Wilson:

I think one of the things that surprises me is that we often seem taken aback by these different problems like turnover or recruitment. But the fact of the matter is a lot of the problems are both predictable and preventable. For example, if you have a large cohort, you can trace them through the organization over time and predict what kind of problems you're going to have from a management perspective, a promotion perspective, training, supervision, and then guess what? Turnover. If they all retire at the same time, it's going to go from a very senior organization to what? A very junior organization. You have to replace all those people at the same time. But you can predict all of that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I don't know if this is good or bad because I'm not as embedded in policing as I think I would like to be. Hold on. I got to wait until that goes past.

{aircraft flies over}

Appreciate your service from 30,000 feet up. God, that's loud, isn't it? Okay. There were two of them. That makes sense. Clearly, the recruits coming, oh, fuck me. It's still loud. This is not a comment on whether it's good or bad, but it's quite

clear that recruits in policing now are very different than they were 20, 30, 40 years ago when I started. Does that affect things like retention as well?

Jeremy Wilson:

Absolutely. With the field work that I've done, the agencies that I've worked with report the kind of differences that have huge impacts on staffing. So for example, older generations, they would go to work for one organization their entire career. They would work overtime, they would work nights, they followed orders. They didn't ask questions. They were much more amenable to the structured work style of a police department. But as generations move forward, they were less comfortable with those things. They were more questioning of why they're doing things. They want things to be explained. They don't want to work overtime or evenings. They want to have a better work-life balance. And so those sorts of things are very difficult for police organizations to adapt and respond to.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And I'm sure also thinking about how to train mid-level staff who've been around 10, 15, 20 years, how better to work with these new recruits because they are different.

Jeremy Wilson:

And I think some agencies are probably better at that than others. Some say, look, this is the way we do it. You either get on board or get out sort of thing. Others, I think say, well, these younger individuals coming in have a lot to offer. We should take advantage of their willingness to contribute and their ideas and the skills that they bring. And so anything organizations are like people. Organizations have their own personality and style and culture. Yes, they do. They certainly do. And that's been one of the fascinating things of a lot of my work. How does policing compare to other industries? I see them as kind of following industry, like the private sector in some ways of trying to become much more focused on efficiency and showing ROI in their own ways. But in some of the areas I've worked, I think law enforcement is actually a little bit ahead. And so going back to our conversation about allocation, we've seen a lot of work in law enforcement industry about allocation modeling and coming up with the right number of officers. With the work I've done in industry, they haven't seen a lot of that work. So in that respect, law enforcement is leading industry. We can kind of take lessons we've learned there and apply it in private industry.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I hate to see crime analysts diverted from a primary core function to actually help departments keep people safe. That's got to be core activity. But having more people with a skill set to do data analysis, but especially looking at allocations, geographic patterns, how long people are spending on calls, travel time, all that kind of stuff really has value in

Jeremy Wilson:

Absolutely

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Informing this whole picture.

Jeremy Wilson:

It does. I will say though, in the context of workload assessments in a lot of situations, I think agencies have found value in bringing in outside experts. For that, though, often there's some contention around how many do we need? There's differences of opinion between the city, the agency, the community. So they need someone, an independent arbiter.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Let's bring in somebody like Jeremy Wilson who we can all blame.

Jeremy Wilson:

Oh, well, yeah. Well, exactly.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But also I think it's so often the case is that I will go in and talk to agencies about evidence-based policing or crime reduction, and there are certain people within those departments that know everything that I'm saying, but you just can't be a prophet in your own land because they come with baggage. You

Jeremy Wilson:

Got to at least 200 miles away.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We need to bring in an outside expert, but we know all this stuff. But it just brings this credibility, which is obviously nonsense. But it sounds like the same issue because there are too many internal people with vested sort of camps.

Jeremy Wilson:

That's right. You have to bring someone in that doesn't have a dog in the race. That's the phrase I was looking for.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

A lot of this, we've talked about patrol activity. Has this been applied to detective work? Because I find it fascinating that in a lot of the coast cities that I work with, there's a homicide, there'll be a couple of detectives, work it for a night, and then it's given to one of the detectives who sits on that with five other cases. When there's a homicide in the uk, there's a team of 15 detectives assigned to it for six months. Just the workloads are completely different. And I think largely explain some of the significant disparities we get in clearance rates. Is it harder to do it with investigative work?

Jeremy Wilson:

I wouldn't say it's harder. In some ways, it may be simpler. These models, they can be applied to virtually any kind of work unit. You're basically looking at workload demand and staffing supply. We've applied these models in

investigations and recruitment, background investigations, and was working with the National Park Service, and they wanted us to apply our methodology and working with them. And so we got to go to places like Yosemite and Yellowstone. It was really a tough gig.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How do you get all to go to good places? I've spent my whole career going to places where nobody ever waves at the police with all their fingers. You get to go to national parks. It seems unfair.

Jeremy Wilson:

It really was amazing. But that's a fascinating use case because they don't have a lot of call demand, but they have vast resources, thousands and thousands of miles that are spread out, and they have overnight campers and all this and their nearest backup maybe two days away.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How do we address these notions of quality people in the right place? Because you know what it's like you can put somebody terrible in a job, and it's a body, But They're just crap at it, and they're not actually helping the agency any bit. How do we build into these models the idea of finding the right people for the right jobs?

Jeremy Wilson:

That's a great question because we are often focused on, what's that right number? But policing is much more than just the quantity. It's also the quality,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right? Because I see police departments lowering their standards just to make sure they get up to this artificially derived staffing number. And I'm thinking that departments making a problem for themselves. The next 20 or 30 years bring in low qualified candidates to do the job.

Jeremy Wilson:

Yeah. I've talked to a lot of practitioners that said, well, we would much prefer running under our allocated level and be understaffed with high quality people than to bring other people on. That's going to be causing trouble and concern and effort for the organization in the

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Future. Because you get a couple of bad people on a shift and it just drags everybody down. They don't carry their weight, they don't do the work. And when they go into a call, you can see everybody rolling their eyes, they're going to fuck it up, and it's going to be more work for everybody.

Jeremy Wilson:

I think a lot of that does become more qualitative and maybe a little bit more of an art than a science. I mean, yeah, we can build a model to look at numbers, but how do we evaluate quality? I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done around metrics and how do we gauge quality and how we build that end, the front end, all the way to the back end.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And of course, that often requires training and money, and yeah, that's another cost that cities have to factor in

Jeremy Wilson:

And another part of the system that we need to consider when we're looking at this staffing issue.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's fascinating stuff. So what are you working on now? What's coming out in the future?

Jeremy Wilson:

Continuing on in this area, we're building all kinds of allocation models for special units like investigations and other proactive units. We're looking at work schedules and how they impact allocation. We've got studies on organizational learning, basically building out that entire staffing system and drilling down in all the bits.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And you're doing all of this through the Michigan State University Police Staffing, observative, I got that right.?

Jeremy Wilson:

That's right. Fantastic. That's a mouthful. I know.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's alright. I want to make sure the name's right. So if people want to Google it, you've got a website. How can people find out more?

Jeremy Wilson:

We do. Come check out our website. One of the nice things is we have about four dozen partners from around the world who are experts in police staffing. And so we pull together all their resources and put 'em in one place so practitioners or researchers can go to our website and find that large body of evidence-based police staffing work. And what is the website? It's a long one because it's embedded within the school.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well then I'll tell you what I'll do. You can send it to me and if people go to reducing crime.com/podcast and you look up this episode with Jeremy, I'll make sure to include a link to it in the short notes that accompany this episode. That would be great. Yep. Well, it is lunchtime. Shall we go and grab a bite? Sweet. Yeah, let's grab a bite, perhaps an adult beverage to do something about this dry heat you talk about. Yeah, thanks for taking some time.

That was episode 87 of Reducing Crime recorded in Tucson, Arizona in May, 2020.

At @reducingcrime.com you can find episode transcripts and if you're an instructor and DM me, I will send multiple choice questions for every episode. Subscribe, why don't you, at Spotify, SoundCloud, apple, or wherever. Otherwise, I'll make you live in the dry heat of Tucson.

Be safe and best of luck.