

#99 (RACHEL TOBLER)

This transcription was provided by a transcription service that uses artificial intelligence. While their advertising claims accuracy for clear audio transcriptions, Reducing Crime LLC and Jerry Ratcliffe have not checked the transcription and make no warranties or representations of any sort, implied or expressed about the reliability, availability or accuracy of services, products, information or transcriptions contained on our website or in this document for any purpose. We make no claim that this transcription is verbatim. Any reliance that you place on the information contained within this document is strictly at your own risk.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Reducing Crime features conversations with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Folks, before we dive in, mark your calendars for June 14th to the 16th next year. When my colleagues and I from the University of Pennsylvania's Master of Applied Criminology and Police Leadership Program will be hosting the 11th annual American Society of Evidence-Based Policing Conference in beautiful Philadelphia. And if you're listening to this in the days immediately after the episode has dropped, then the call for papers is still open. We would love to see you in Philly. So come and hear all about the latest research on policing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Reducing Crime features conversations with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers.

Rachel Tobler is the police chief for the Redlands Police Department in California. She's one of the founding members of the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing. We talk about the growth of evidence-based policing from a chief's perspective and why new police leaders should get on board the EBP wagon train.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm Jerry Ratcliffe, and this is Reducing Crime, now in its ninth year. Yeah. As I said in the open, Rachel Tobler is the Redlands police chief and has served with the department for 28 years. She's also a former National Institute of Justice lead scholar, having been an early participant in their law enforcement advancing data and science program, as well as a policing fellow with the National Policing Institute. Her contributions to policing outside of Redlands include being a member of the research advisory committee for the IACP, sitting on the steering committee for 30 by 30, and she's a founding board member and current emeritus board member for the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing.

As a result of her contributions to policing more generally, she was awarded the Gary P. Hayes Award from the Police Executive Research Forum in 2025. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Redlands, a master's from the University of California Irvine, and a master's in applied criminology from the prestigious policing program at

Cambridge University. Hey, it's nearly as prestigious as the master's in applied criminology and police leadership at the University of Pennsylvania. We chatted at the 2026 ASEBP conference in Washington DC, catching up on all the presentations that we were enjoying.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You are not from this coast. How did you end up spending time here?

Rachel Tobler:

I am so fortunate to come to the 10th annual conference for the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, that is such a fluff comment for crying out loud. Did Renee Mitchell pay you to say that?

Rachel Tobler:

Of course, she did. No, actually, I was very fortunate to be part of the original group that formed ASCBP, actually, 11 years ago. And I've missed the last couple of years just because of work and family, and there was no way I was going to miss this conference, and it has not disappointed.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I've been involved in the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing. I was the first paid-up member, but you predate that because you were on the kind of core group that, with Jim Bueermann and Renee Mitchell, just started the whole thing.

Rachel Tobler:

Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How did that come about?

Rachel Tobler:

There was a group of us that had gone to Cambridge and studied with Larry Sherman there.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Why did you? I mean, that's a hell of a way to go from the West Coast.

Rachel Tobler:

It goes back to 97. That's going to show you. I was like 12 when I started in policing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Its amazing. So you were even born then. Where did you grow up?

Rachel Tobler:

I grew up in New Mexico. I ended up going to the University of Redlands, which I did not know until this conference. I was talking to John McDonald, who let me know that James Q. Wilson actually did his undergrad at the University of Redlands. I had no idea all these years. Anyway, it was destined. Big name in policing. Yeah, destined to be. And in 97 I got a parking ticket or maybe 96 and I went to go fight the parking ticket and I walked in to -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

As you do.

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah, of course. Because it was like \$25. It was so expensive. And I went in and I met Jim Bueermann and really the rest is history.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Hold on a minute. You went to fight a parking ticket and you met Jim Bueermann.

Rachel Tobler:

And I met Jim Behrmann.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Are you making the show?

Rachel Tobler:

I am not. I mean, his version's a little different, but it really is the same story. So I meet Jim and he says, "Can't help you with the parking ticket," which I did pay, best parking ticket I ever paid, "But you can come back and be an intern for me your senior year in college." Well, first he asked me to talk a little bit about my interests. Right,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Because he was a police chief in Redlands.

Rachel Tobler:

He was. And I grew up, my mom was a forensic pediatrician, so she worked with federal, state, and local law enforcement on child abuse cases. And my stepdad was a forensic dentist.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Sorry, where does the dentist bit come into thinking about being involved in policing?

Rachel Tobler:

Well, he was a forensic dentist, so he was identifying remains, bite mark identification, things that now the National Academy of Sciences has come back and said some different things. But at any rate -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You really grew up in a CSI household then, didn't you?

Rachel Tobler:

Oh Totally. Yeah? I know.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The conversations at the dinner table were bloody and gory and you loved every one of them.

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah, it was fascinating. It really was fascinating. So I knew I wanted to go into policing and then I met Jim and I started as an intern, and at the time he was looking at risk-focused policing and looking at prevention and evidence-based policing from the early days, and I fell in love with it. And so I'm really fortunate because I've come up in an organization that really values research, evidence-based policing. And yeah, that's how it all started.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. And so you went to college and then you joined the police department?

Rachel Tobler:

That's correct.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And you've stayed with the Redlands?

Rachel Tobler:

I have. 28 years. Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How much has policing changed over that period of time? Oh

Rachel Tobler:

My gosh, so much. We were just talking about this the other day because we just implemented a drone as first responder, but we were talking about just the technology alone that when we started in 98, you didn't have a body-worn camera and you didn't have. I don't even know if we had tasers. We used to have old cassette taping for recording. You hooked us up to all those technical -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We didn't record interviews when I started. So you're just showing off you're a young child. Okay.

Rachel Tobler:

See, I told you I started really young. So just thinking about the technology and the shifts and changes in that 28-year period, and then how quickly technology's progressing now, it's crazy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. What rank were you when Jim started talking about the society?

Rachel Tobler:

I was a sergeant. So it all started with, he was doing some work with David Weisburd had come in to do a study looking at the risk-focused policing stuff. We had done some other different studies with some different academics, and I think it was around 2009, he said, "Hey, would you want to go to Cambridge?"

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Do you get that it's kind of nuts that a police chief kind of goes, "Hey, would you like to go and spend some time in Cambridge in the UK?" From any coast that's still in the ballpark of, "What the hell? That's crazy." Yeah, totally,

Rachel Tobler:

Totally nuts. But again, by that time, I'd been working with Jim for a long time and he was, I should say was, he is such a visionary, right? He's always looking ahead. And so he said, "Do you want to go to Cambridge?" I thought, "Well, of course, who doesn't want to go to Cambridge?" That was the first thing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's a pretty cool place, I got to admit.

Rachel Tobler:

But he kept talking about Larry, Larry, Larry. I finally was like, "Hey, time out."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Careful if you mention his name any more times, he just magically appears.

Rachel Tobler:

I go, "Jim, who's Larry?" And there he is, right? Okay. So I said, "Who's Larry?" And he goes, "Well, Laurence Sherman." And I'm like, "Wait, the Lawrence Sherman who I have cited in probably every paper I'd ever written during my undergrad, and then I had done a degree at UC Irvine." And he's like, "Yeah. Oh, of course I want to go." I mean, it was really amazing.

The connection then, because there were other folks that had started going from the US, so obviously Renee Mitchell, and she and I were talking today because it was like, "Well, when did I meet her?" I think the very first time I met her, she actually was in Redlands. Jim had brought her and Cynthia-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Cynthia Lum.

Rachel Tobler:

Had come to speak, and that was when the Matrix first started. So to hear Cynthia talking about it today -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Isn't she fabulous? It's great.

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah, it was really awesome.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I love her and Chris Koper, they're just the most wonderful couple and just super smart, and just they care so much about this field and the people and that comes across so warmly.

Rachel Tobler:

They do. And to see the growth of the Matrix and just the body of research over that period of time and how much more we know and how many more people are involved from the academic side is pretty outstanding.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. And I think what they've also been able to do with Cambridge is just design a program that was created to support evidence-based policing, because there's a real need for it now. I mean, you've now grown to take on the chief role. When you were going for your interview for chief, did the fact that you were involved in evidence-based policing, do you think it helped? Do you think it made a difference? Because you are still going in as a bit of a heretic, as a bit of a revolutionary to some degree in very traditional policing environments.

Rachel Tobler:

Well, so the dynamics around my coming into the chief role were a little bit different. I think that it was certainly helpful because I was involved with a lot of things, I think at a national level that helped prepare me to see the world of policing through a much broader lens. And

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So

Rachel Tobler:

That was very helpful. I can tell you being in the role now, I'm three years in, starting into my fourth year, and being able to implement strategies within the organization, having our folks think about the deployment in operations to recruitment and retention and being able to use that body of knowledge and incorporate that and the successes that we see, I think is extremely helpful.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I once spoke to John Mina, who's the sheriff of Orange County in Florida, and he said one of the great things about being a sheriff is you are not accountable to anybody except for the electorate every kind of four years. Sure. But a municipal police chief has people involved in the day-to-day oversight who know nothing about policing whatsoever. How do you manage a role that they're probably not used to hearing somebody talking about research and science and evidence to support what you're doing?

Rachel Tobler:

That's a really good question. The thing that I try to do is break it down to as basic as I can and not necessarily go into the academic talk of the research behind it other than here's what we know works and this is why we're going to implement whatever it is we're going to implement and then ultimately whatever the outcome, good or bad, and then we tweak it. I think you talked about that today, tweaking things as we go.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Do you think they feel if you do go too much the academic route that you're trying to bamboozle them?

Rachel Tobler:

I think that it doesn't connect and resonate. So even when I talk about the transition to NIBRS, which we did.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

This is the national incident-based -

Rachel Tobler:

Reporting

Jerry Ratcliffe:

System. Reporting system. Yeah.

Rachel Tobler:

And so, trying to explain why we couldn't compare apples to apples and why we had to wait a little bit to see what the crime trends were, four years' worth of data, and now I can talk about what that is.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, is Chief Tobler trying to sweep something under the rug here?

Rachel Tobler:

Well, yeah. And so trying to explain that, but trying to break it down as basic as I can, ultimately talk about why it's important. What does that mean to them? Why is that important overall in policing?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And that's an important message to hone because policing is responsive in a democracy to this outside authority.

Rachel Tobler:

Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And they don't know a great deal in the nicest possible way. We're not here to get you fired, but your comments is like run away.

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah, but I mean, I do think it's important to explain why that's important.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yes. As departments go, you're one of the premier departments that has been doing this work a long time, and that's basically to credit of yourself and Jim Bueermann. Is everybody on board with, or at least enough people on board with it that it feels relatively comfortable?

Rachel Tobler:

I think simply yes, because it's been part of the culture for so long. With that said, there are certainly folks that are naysayers

Jerry Ratcliffe:

To it. Of course.

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah. And coming up through the ranks as a sergeant, I had a couple of corporals that worked with me and they were like, "Oh, the role of academics." I think you kind of alluded to it today too, that activism,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right? The plenary talk today. Yes, that's

Rachel Tobler:

Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. Activist scholars, there's really no such thing. Make a decision. You're either an activist or a scholar.

Rachel Tobler:

Sure. But that idea of trying to put police in a bad light, and so my argument back was that may be the case, and that's why it's so important for us to be at the table in terms of making these decisions. We should be a voice guiding the direction of the research that's taking place because that's ultimately what we're then going to be able to utilize thinking about policy, practice and what we do in the future.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I sometimes see evidence-based policing as whether you want to be on it or not, it is a cart and it is rolling down the road. You can either be the dog that sits up with the guy driving the horses up on the car, or you can be the dog that gets dragged along on the lead at the end of it. I think we need to be up there with the driver, with the community and pushing it forward.

Rachel Tobler:

I agree. I was just going to add one other thing. I didn't mean to cut you off, but I wanted one other thing because I think that the other thing that I think is really exciting is when someone who may not be a naysayer, but may not totally embrace evidence-based policing, they get a new assignment and you throw something out there like, "Think about finding your hotspots for traffic." This is an example. "Let's have your folks go out there and do traffic enforcement in these areas for, I don't know, say 12 or 15 minutes during these times and then move around and all of a sudden they come back six, seven months later and like," Oh my gosh, the traffic collisions have really gone down in these areas. "I'm like," Voila. "You've just taken a practice and implemented it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And guess what? We can police our way out of a problem. You talked about it's been in the culture. How did you get there? What are the lessons for other departments that are wanting to create that culture?

Rachel Tobler:

One of the things is just having a very strong visionary leader within the organization, and we did in Jim. He looked for different ways to collaborate and partner with different academics to come in and do studies. And some folks found it tiring that there were constantly studies and different things going on. We're doing something different today. You can kind of get that fatigue. And so then you get the pushback like, oh, this is too much.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I kind of get it, but some people it's like, can I just have some consistency in my appointments? And it's because the kids are playing up at home and their partner's not that well and the dog was sick that morning and they've got parents they're having to go and deal with their elderly. They've got a lot of stuff going on in their life. I get it, but you've managed to find a way in Redlands at least for the culture to move forward.

Rachel Tobler:

Well, I think there's a couple things. One is being mindful not to do too much at one time.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. Pace the change.

Rachel Tobler:

Exactly. And then shift and change a little bit more slowly. But I do think too, Redlands, the home of Esri.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. I mean, it's the premier spatial analysis mapping company in the world.

Rachel Tobler:

Yes. Like I say, it's baked into the culture. We've been using mapping and crime analysis my entire career.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So what's the sell if I'm a police chief in a department that doesn't have that?

Rachel Tobler:

For me, it's thinking about why we do what we do. If we're out there and we're police officers because we want to make our community safer, we want to make it a better place for people to live and raise their families, then looking at what works matters. I mean, ultimately that's it. And again, it comes back to why. Why do you do what you do?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, I mean, you're always going to get a variety of answers. As a guest speaker, Kathy Lanier, who now is the head of security, the presence of security for the NFL, but she used to be police chief in Washington DC. Yes. She joined policing because she needed the benefits.

Rachel Tobler:

Of course.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. But there clearly is a sell to her. She's very data driven in the work that she does now. She's come to that realization probably pretty quickly because she's very smart. Yes. She is. But there has to be a way to bring in people who are just kind of, "I'm only in this to pay the mortgage."

Rachel Tobler:

And you're right. But I am of a mind. I think once you get into policing, we talk about this a lot. There's a calling. There's the camaraderie of working with a team. You're out there responding to people's needs. And I do think that if you don't truly care about people, it's hard to stay in this profession for any extended period of time.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Were you like that from the start or was it something that came to you over the course of your career?

Rachel Tobler:

That's a really good question. So I was just fascinated with why people did what they did. I mean, truthfully, when I first started, but when I started as an intern, I was going on some ride-alongs and seeing the interaction between the officers and the people they were interacting with, whether they were victims, whether they were suspects, homeless folks with addiction, it was like, "Man, I have an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life." I think early on as

an intern, that was what excited me. I mean, let's be real too, right? There's a sense of adrenaline, right? Of course. Yeah. I mean, there's a lot of things going on.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's certainly a job with more adrenaline than being an accountant.

Rachel Tobler:

Without a doubt. I guess I should say, I mean, on a daily basis, there's a high risk every time you get in a police car, right? I have guys that suit up and go out each and every day.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yes.

Rachel Tobler:

There's that potential that you aren't going to come home. I think though there's that excitement of being there, being in the middle, being able to impact, being with someone on the worst day of their life and being able to make a difference, whether it's solve the crime, arrest somebody, protect them, or even someone who has addiction problems, being able to get them into some kind of system that is going to help them in the long run. I had a real interest in reentry for probably the first part of my career.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I don't speak to recruit classes. I think they have to figure all that stuff out. They have to go and get the adrenaline stuff out of their way. But I think for me, Essel, and I just wonder if it was the same for you, which is after a while it's like that stuff is in the end. You are going to what feels like the same calls again and again and again. And for me, I had a mountaineering accent, couldn't stay in policing, but I was already kind of getting the sense with eight, nine, 10, 11 years service like, okay, this is going to be a long 20 years going to the same old bullshit to some degree and the same old stuff. What else is there? Is there something new? I think that can be a hook for some people into the field of evidence-based policing.

Do you see that with some of your officers?

Rachel Tobler:

Absolutely. I think anyone after you've gone to the same domestic or the same. For me, I think that probably was it too, looking at the reentry because I kept seeing the same people over and over and over again. I was like, "What are we doing?"

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Just yo-yoing in and out of prison. Yeah.

Rachel Tobler:

And obviously you're talking about what we can do for them, but it's not just them. It's, like I say, the community because if they have a job and aren't doing drugs and aren't victimizing people, the community is safer, their families, a lot of them have kids and what happens generationally and thinking about that in terms of crime is really important. So that for me was for sure, I think that first hook in.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What are some of the other things you're seeing here at the conference and in the field that are interesting you?

Rachel Tobler:

Like I mentioned earlier, the drone as first responder, I'm really excited to see where the research comes out on that. I will tell you, we just implemented a DFR about two weeks ago and within the first week we had our first arrest and that was exciting for everyone. It had to do with e-bikes and e-motors, this huge thing. Not a day later, we went out on a call with a armed man with a bat, and the power of deescalation with having that tool is huge. You think about the power to be able to take someone into custody and deescalate a situation without any injury to them or to our officers is priceless. There was a really interesting conversation on constitutional policing and policy, thinking about the different changes in our world because our world just is changing so rapidly. I mean really from COVID, George Floyd, all these things that have happened.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How did your department fare during that? Because you're in California, which is a very. I try to remain as apolitical as possible, but I think it's fair to say a very progressive state and you were in leadership positions throughout this whole period of time. How difficult was that?

Rachel Tobler:

So it's really interesting because the state is so different geographically. It's such a big state. And so you may have areas that are extremely progressive and areas that are more conservative. Where we are in Redlands, it is in San Bernardino County, a smaller town. We're about 80,000 in the community, 36 square miles. During the time, it was really interesting because throughout almost all of my career, we really had never dealt with a lot of protests or anything. The same group would go and protest on Peace Corner, but it wasn't really -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The usual suspects.

Rachel Tobler:

It was the usual. It wasn't your huge, large group.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What is the cause of the month?

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah, whatever is going on. And after George Floyd, we were seeing huge, huge protests. I mean, I never thought I would see 1200, 1500 people circled around State Street protesting. I will say I'm also an NIJ LEAD scholar. I remember reaching out to some of my colleagues from across the country that were dealing with big protests and talking about what we knew and the tactics and how we were going to approach and work with those who were protesting to ensure that they were able to exercise their First Amendment right, but also in a safe manner.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

For a lot of police departments, it used to be, "We're used to policing protests, but now it's about us."

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah. I mean, that was definitely a unique situation. We had some really kind of cool conversations that came out of it with some of the organizers and folks that were there in the protests that actually, at the end of the day, went and I can think of one of my sergeants in particular where they went and had coffee afterwards and just talked about both sides of what it was like to be an officer. That's good work. That's good police work. They were. They did an amazing job, but I think it was very, very difficult. COVID's another thing. No one had seen anything like that before. I remember a group talking with my colleagues in New Jersey, hearing from them, "Hey, what are you doing? How are you shifting? What are you doing to take care of your troops so we can still continue to take care of the community?"

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That I think is a really interesting point because when I see police departments, especially in the United States, where there are so many small police departments with a handful of officers, and the most that they get engaged in any kind of a research is like, "Okay, we've got drones or body-worn cameras. Let's just scan around and see what our neighboring departments are doing so that we can just basically copy something they're doing. Even if it's not working, we'll at least fail conventionally." Yes. And I think it's fascinating that you are able to reach out to a network that spanned the entire country to get a much broader range, and it's also people that have self-selected through the NIJ LEADS program into a sort of more intellectual group. You suddenly have a much broader range of opinions on which to draw and experiences.

Rachel Tobler:

It's truly amazing to be able to do that. I think back to the question you asked me about being a chief in this role, and I think one of the things that I bring as a chief is that network, because I am certainly never going to know everything, but I have this huge network of academics, proacademics, people who have done experience or done research in all these different areas, and I'm able to ask them and they're able to then to translate instead of the whole whatever hundred page study

Jerry Ratcliffe:

To break it down - To know it as a reading. Yeah.

Rachel Tobler:

Break it down to me and be able to say, "Okay, here are the practical pieces of what we know, and then how can you apply it?" And so that expedites that process of transmission of the research and then into our practice and policy. We're able to get it quicker, so is everybody else. And I think that that's also going to drive the need for evidence-based policing because there's an expectation - the

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Information. So now the opposition are also able to know much better what works and what doesn't.

Rachel Tobler:

Which means we need to also.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yes. And I wonder your thoughts that that's the next step in policing, because as I say, I go to some places and I see the department, their whole idea of research is just seeing what the surrounding departments are doing. I'm going, "Well, even if you figure out the best practice, you are simply going to be the least worst of all of these departments if you all choose to do something that's fundamentally not working or failing." It's a sort of local reproduction of failure as opposed to scanning much further, much wider.

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah. Well, and it's funny because early on, Travis Taniguchi came and he was an embedded criminologist in the department.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And he was my former PhD student. Great guy. Yes, he is a fantastic scholar too.

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah, he was wonderful and he was great to work with and was great to have in the organization. But the reality is most police departments aren't going to have an embedded criminologist. And so then how do you create the network to gain access to the information? I'm sure my team gets tired of hearing me say like, "Okay, well, you want to do this. Well, what do we know about it?" And if we don't know whether it works or doesn't work, what are we going to do to try to evaluate whether it works or that we're having the desired outcomes?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Those two questions are the key questions. What do we know about this and how are we going to evaluate it? That's fantastic. Do you get rolling eyes every now and again?

Rachel Tobler:

Yeah, I do. But I think one of the things that I've started to do and realize, again, just the network that I've been able to develop is making sure that my team also has connections to that network. So if I have my training and hiring team,

we're talking about recruitment, like everybody else dealing with recruitment issues. So what are we going to do? Well, hey, I have a friend Anthony Gibson and Terry Cherry. Why don't you hop on the phone and see what they've been doing and what their work says and let's look at how we implement that. So now the connection's been made and thinking about how do I connect other people in my organization, whether it's bringing them to ASCVP or directly connecting them in with folks to ensure that we're implementing things that have been tested, but if it hasn't been tested and we still need to evaluate within our department, we're still working on building that capacity, I think internally.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You know this evidence-based policing field inside out, and you have this wonderful experience of having been involved in the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing from the scratch. If I'm a chief, if I'm a deputy chief, I'm an up and coming mid to senior level leader in the organization and I want to know where to start, what are the three things that you would tell them?

Rachel Tobler:

The three things I would say is become a member of ASCBP.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay. Why?

Rachel Tobler:

Because the connections within ASCVP, both with the academics and also practitioners is invaluable. Being able to talk about the challenges that you're facing and talk with folks that are doing work in those areas that can talk to you about what works and what doesn't work is invaluable. The second thing would be wherever you're working, whatever organization it is, really learn about your department data, what's going on, whether it's about crime, your administrative side, learn what data you have available.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Do you think people are really not familiar? Do you find that people sometimes just are not aware of what possibilities they have in terms of local data? I mean, I'll be upfront, I've seen that. I've seen people. I don't think they often see the potential it has.

Rachel Tobler:

I don't think that sometimes people realize the potential and having a good analyst being able to analyze that data because really data without the analysis and the context behind it isn't actionable.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yes.

Rachel Tobler:

So I suppose I probably did say that not exactly how I would want to, which is get someone who can analyze your data and be able to show you the picture of what's actually going on.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And that's okay. That goes to prove people who think this thing is scripted. We're just throwing questions and this and facing back and forth.

Rachel Tobler:

So there you go. So I mean, really being able to look at what is going on because I think sometimes anecdotally we think we know what's going on and sometime it is consistent with what is actually happening. And again, whether that's in terms of crime going on in your jurisdiction or administratively

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Internally. And the third thing?

Rachel Tobler:

The third thing is identify places where you can get translated criminology.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And so the places you would go to?

Rachel Tobler:

I would look at the Matrix.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah, Police Based Policing Matrix.

Rachel Tobler:

Evidence Based Policing Matrix and Center for Evidence Based Policing. I would go to the briefs from ASCVP, and I would also have someone like you or an academic teaching and criminology to come into - Okay,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Glad you push onto somebody else. Don't have people fill my inbox. My to-do list is already longer than a German opera.

Rachel Tobler:

Well, okay. But I mean, someone -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I get too many emails as it is.

Rachel Tobler:

Someone who can come in and do basic training and evidence-based policing with your team and with your organization.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And translate it for you. Yeah. And I think I would add to that everybody needs to be aware of the Center for Problem Oriented Policing.

Rachel Tobler:

Thank you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Problem Oriented Policing website, I think is just a gold mine of just how to do stuff and how to fix crime problems. Absolutely. And for the overseas people, I would throw in the What Works Center from the home office that's had a huge amount of work done by Kate Bower, Shane Johnson, that whole team in London. I think there was just a small group of places to go to. I'd just add those two.

Rachel Tobler:

No, I'm glad that you did. Because I was thinking in threes when you were asking me in threes, you're right, it isn't scripted. So thinking about all these different areas. But I do think having someone come into the organization and teach the basics is really important.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, that's good though. We've talked a lot about the field, but in terms of your skillset on this journey, what do you think are some of the skills that access to evidence-based policing has helped you pick up?

Rachel Tobler:

I think some of the big things are being strategic, being able to look at the big picture, being able to come in and identify what the needs are of an organization.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Evidence-based policing gives you a chance to step back from the front line and just have a better feel for what's needed. Yeah.

Rachel Tobler:

And I think too, because evidence-based policing spans, people ask me, "Okay, well, evidence-based policing has to do with crime reduction." Yes, it does. But there's research on policing aspects from everything from how you should outfit your patrol cars to how you hire and retain to the wellness. And so it allows me anyway to go in and look at a high level and span across and say, "Okay, where is my organization doing really, really well? And where are places where we could use some improvement? And what does the body of research in that area say about this particular issue?"

And if I don't know, then I can phone a friend and say, "Hey, Steve James or Lois or whoever. I mean, I've reached out to you too to get your book and bring it into my team as well. Who do I know that can bring that skill, that information, that evidence to the organization to make it successful?"

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And I go to a lot of places where I meet senior leaders who they just don't have a network and it shows they do a lot of things that don't work. They do a lot of things that fail. They get frustrated. They just don't have those kind of networks. Building those networks is also an acquired skill, I think really, isn't it?

Rachel Tobler:

It really is. And again, it doesn't matter how you go about doing it, whether it's through the University of Cambridge and that group, whether it's through ASEBP or any of the SEBPs. And now there's so much focus on all the SEBPs, Canadian and ANZEB and SEVP from UK and the main societies all coming together to share that information because it is nice to be able to pick up a phone or email or whatever people all over the world about the work that they're doing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, you've lasted through more than three years. You're in your fourth year as a chief. I think in terms of longevity of chiefs, you're out of 'Sniper Alley', right?

Rachel Tobler:

Am I? Okay, great. Well, I think so. Outstanding.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The average tenure a chief is only like three years these days. But what I've noticed is that once people get over that hurdle, you often have just enough experience and longevity to be able to ride out changes of administration and things like that to your point. So hopefully you're going to get there, but I think it's great to see you obviously young and dynamic leader and you're going to make massive contributions to this field and continue to do so. And you helped start this whole thing. Now we know who to play.

Rachel Tobler:

There you go. That's right. Yeah, for sure.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, this has been great. Thank you. I'm glad that we got a chance to catch up. Thanks for sitting down and chatting to me.

Rachel Tobler:

Appreciate it. Thank you.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That was episode 99 of Reducing Crime recorded in May 2026 in Washington DC. If you teach DM me for multiple choice questions for every episode, you can find a transcript of this episode at reducingcrime.com. Subscribe to this podcast at Spotify, SoundCloud, Apple, or wherever you pod so you can catch other fantastic episodes just like this.

Be safe and best of luck.