

#06 (WENDY STIVER)

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Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm Jerry Ratcliffe with Reducing Crime, a podcast featuring interviews with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers working to advance public safety. Wendy Stiver is a major with the Dayton Ohio Police Department and among the first members of the National Institute of Justice's LEADS scholar program. We chat about overcoming resistance to evidence-based policing and her new role as the first LEADS practitioner in residence. Find out more at reducingcrime.com and on Twitter at [_reducingcrime](https://twitter.com/_reducingcrime). Major Wendy Stiver is the commander of the Central Patrol division at the Dayton Ohio Police Department. She's also served as the commander of the Central Investigations Bureau and in both East and West patrol divisions in the city. She holds a Master's degree in criminal justice from the University of Cincinnati, and is also a graduate to the police executive leadership college.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

As an active practitioner, she has researched infant mortality cases, patrol officer exposure to secondary trauma, and she led a foot patrol evaluation in collaboration with the University of Cincinnati. Wendy is one of the pioneers in the American evidence-based practitioner community and recently started as a senior research advisor to the National Institute of Justice's LEADS scholar program, acting as a practitioner in residence. I caught up with Wendy at the American Society of Criminology conference in Atlanta in November 2018.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We chat about implementing evidence-based policing, overcoming resistance, and the role of a program like LEADS in a crisis-led management environment. I even find out from her who are the two weird uncles of the LEADS program. What does it feel like being... You got, what, nearly 20 years in the job?

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And you're coming here to the American Society of Criminology, and you're coming to an academic conference. What does that feel like for you?

Wendy Stiver:

I feel enough of a fish out of water. There's enough of a fish out of water experience to it. These aren't the normal conferences I go to and the normal people that I interact with.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

This is an academic conference. There are definitely no normal people here.

Wendy Stiver:

But it's also a place where, and I actually just had this discussion with a younger officer in another agency who talked about how she enjoyed the conversation she was having with me because it wasn't the kind of conversation she could have with her colleagues at work. So talking about some of the things that we tend to talk about in these settings are often verboten in a police department.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right.

Wendy Stiver:

I think it's invigorating in a sense for me to be here and interact with some of the people I've interacted with, but they've all been the one-on-one conversations.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. So you've got this situation that you're a longtime police officer here, a bit of fish out of water at an academic conference, but cherry picking some things that you like. Now, what's it like now that you've been exposed to the research world to some degree, much of it is fluff and a waste of time, but there's bits and pieces that are useful, right?

Wendy Stiver:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Now what's it like to have that and go to IACP?

Wendy Stiver:

Interesting.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Because the International Association of Chiefs of Police is just full of police officers.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You go to a lot of the sessions and it's about their experiences and anecdotes and stories and experiences, which are valuable and we can learn something from them, but it's not the same as what we might learn from more rigorous-

Wendy Stiver:

Research.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

...evidence and research-driven learning.

Wendy Stiver:

Well, I think that's the whole point of our program is to find a middle ground there and to connect those two worlds in a meaningful way to actually have a positive impact on what we do. And I had spent my entire career chasing prac and it was-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

For personal use or...

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. And we used to call it policing for profit. You knew that if you made a felony crack arrest on Tuesday you would get, the following Thursday, you would get subpoenaed in a grand jury. And if the following Thursday was your day off, then you would get seven hours of pay to go tell a story to the grand jury for an hour.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think in a lot of departments, there's quite a few cops who are paying their mortgage on the strength of court time.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. And once you get to the point where you get past the disillusionment that you're not actually doing anything productive, then you just focus on the fact that you're doing something productive for yourself and making money by going to court, making some small contribution to this problem. But we had a chief come in and he started talking about the fact that it wasn't actually effective. We weren't achieving anything.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Was that a key moment for you?

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. Because I had spent the bulk of the early part of my career doing it and not seeing any positive results from it in the community.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Were you starting to see it yourself or was that like a light bulb? "Hey, Whoa, I've got a bit more of my career left. I'll try and do something different."

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. The fact that there was a leader who understood that and then was trying to create opportunities for meaningful work, for us to do things that actually would have an impact on the community, was kind of an aha thing. And it was weird in the organization, but given the opportunity to actually do something that would be effective to help reduce crime or change the problem, refocusing all of our efforts and energies on what we should be focusing on and he did that with reducing gun violence. And now with the opiate epidemic, that philosophy translated into harm reduction versus just enforcement.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I also get the sense that you're at the right place. And part of the reason I wrote the Reducing Crime book-

Wendy Stiver:

Which is in my room.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's handy if you've got a table that's a bit wobbly.

Wendy Stiver:

Actually, I take it with me when I travel because if I want to read something, that's what I want to read.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Part of the reason that I wrote that is it's a difficult market to try and tap into young officers with a couple of years on the street. They almost need to go through a few years to get that sense of disillusionment. And then there are two paths that you can go down. You can either just go, "Look. Business as usual. I'm going to make the crack arrests on the Tuesday. I'll get the court date a week on Thursday. And that will pay my mortgage, see the kids through school and away I go." Or you go, and I like to tap into people and say, "Look, you've got long enough in your career left that making a change now could be really beneficial. You could actually change how it is." I think once we get to the super executive level and people have got 30 plus, 35 years in, the most we can hope for them to do is to set the conditions for other people to succeed and pretty much to get out of the way.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So it's the folk in the middle. Do you want to be doing same old shit for the next decade? Or do you want to try and figure something new that might be fun and interesting, and it might fail but it might succeed, that changes how you feel about policing for the next decade? That's that market that I was hoping to pitch at and that's the market that I think is really interesting to reach. It sounds like that's where you were.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. I think that the key point in reaching that market is going to be when first line supervisors start looking at promotion opportunities. I might sell 20 copies for you. I expect a kickback.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Rutledge probably aren't listening to this, but the royalties I'm getting, that's like-

Wendy Stiver:

Twenty cents?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I might be able to buy you a coffee. But none of that fancy stuff with foam, okay? Let's not push the budget here.

Wendy Stiver:

But I think that you're exactly right. I mean, that's why I bought the book, to start planting those ideas at that stage in the career. And that's the audience that I'm targeting within my own agency because I think now I've been able to do a couple of research projects and implement a couple of small things in my agency, but I'm seeing a lot of resistance and pushback all around me. And so what I really want to do is create capacity for the future.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. Are you running into resistance just generally with the idea of change and using data and evidence and just questioning how we've always done it, or specifically related to the projects that you've tried to run?

Wendy Stiver:

A little bit of. I think from above, my bosses have other objectives and tasks that they're focused on getting accomplished and sometimes they see the projects as being interfering or creating interference if I'm too busy working on a project and I'm not working on their business. So my boss needs me to be available to take care of the things that he needs me to take care of, and so he sees this as a distraction from his priorities.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Even though the chances are the end result of the project will be a benefit for the whole department?

Wendy Stiver:

No. That's difficult to communicate. It's been difficult to communicate that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But it's true.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But it's difficult to say, "Here's a short term discomfort or a short term inconvenience for a long term benefit."

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. And with some police commanders, it's very difficult for them. That's just not how they think or operate particularly if they're task-oriented versus outcome-oriented. I've been assigned project implementation and it's been a matter of, "Here are the tasks that I want you to complete. Achieve this goal." And then there's completely no interest whatsoever in as to whether or not the project had any positive impact on what we were trying to impact. And so there's a disconnect between that. It's, "We did the project. We checked the boxes. We're moving onto another project."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I've done projects with other departments where at some point down the line, somebody's complained, "Hey, we've done all this research with you, but nothing's changed." And of course our response has been, "We gave you the results. We showed you what could be done, but it's not down to us for you to then do that. That's on you. And then to complain about our research projects, when you guys just took the findings and didn't do anything with it, is a difficult conversation to have because it's part of the whole process." There's a focus on, "Oh, the evidence," for evidence-based policing, but everybody forgets the backend, which is, but we have to change policing.

Wendy Stiver:

We have to actually do that. Right. And there's a lot of resistance to change. Some of the adages, if it's not broke don't fix it. So I worked on a foot patrol project with Dr. Corey Haberman from the University of Cincinnati.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Who got his PhD at Temple.

Wendy Stiver:

Yes. And he might have studied with you on some other projects similar in nature, but Doctor-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Smart, smart man.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely. And we got connected through another project. I learned a little bit about his background and what he had been working on and then I was promoted and assigned to the downtown policing district. I went out and met with the community and several people in the community were demanding to see more cops on bikes. I think a lot of times the community doesn't really know what it wants. It thinks it knows what it wants. In this case, they wanted the cops out of the cars.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There's a disconnect between what they want and what they ask for. They want crime to come down, but they don't ask for crime to come down. What they do is they tell you what solution they want you to implement.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And that solution may not necessarily be the one for the problem, but they've skipped the whole analysis stage and said, "This is the solution that we think that we want for this problem."

Wendy Stiver:

And typically it's more enforcement or extra patrol, which makes me crazy. Because there's really no such thing as extra patrol. There's only displaced patrol.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yes.

Wendy Stiver:

And so in order to create extra patrol in one area, I have to take it away from another area. And nobody before me has ever said that out loud. A lot of my predecessors have just been willing to acquiesce to what the community wants without having that tough conversation about whether or not it will be effective. And so in my case, they were demanding more bicycle patrol. They wanted to see the cops outside of the cars. And so knowing that Cory had this background in foot patrol, we talked about doing a project with that and testing it. We actually put that together and tested it in 2017. That met with some resistance for a lot of reasons. I was telling cops to get out of their cars and walk around in specific areas.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And how was the weather?

Wendy Stiver:

So it's Ohio and we get all the seasons sometimes in one day, but we were very liberal in terms of allowing the officers to decide, to have some discretion over it. We said, "Don't get out and walk around in the rain. We don't want you to get sick, obviously. Go where the people are, if it's cold outside."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, to be fair when it's raining, that's when they're the best police officers around.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. That's true. Yeah. Yeah, the weather and sometimes the cold tends to take care of the crime problems for us. At the end of it, we shared the study and the results with the supervisors that showed that we experienced a decrease in disorder crimes in the areas where we were doing these foot patrols. And one of my supervisors just questioned the entire project and accused the researcher of telling us whatever we wanted to hear because the project was funded and he'd been paid for it. And so it was hard enough to get the officers to agree to participate in the program, but then to have supervisors who were suspicious and questioning made it even more difficult.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah, that's tough.

Wendy Stiver:

So I needed buy-in from all levels in this project.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's funny how the research on foot patrol over the years, and probably especially since the Philadelphia foot patrol experiment, has been used and abused often, not deliberately, not maliciously, but it's definitely people have taken a finding that they've heard, they've read in a one page PDF and go, "Okay, we're doing this." And there are parts of Philadelphia where we had really positive benefits with foot patrols in small, concise high crime areas. And over the years I suspect what's happened is the captains have been pressured to a crime problem that's a few blocks outside. So they've extended the foot patrol area, and then they've extended it again. And now some of them are huge. And of course, a lot of the captains are probably thinking, "That's great. I'm extending this benefit to a bigger area." But of course what we're doing is diluting the effect. So now, instead of being effective in a small area, we're being completely ineffective in a larger area. But it ticks a box to say, "I've got foot patrol in these areas," even though it's now horribly ineffective. It's almost a victim of its own success, if that makes sense.

Wendy Stiver:

Which we tend to get driven back into the task-oriented, we're checking the boxes and doing what people think they want.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think it's also hard once you do get some success there's, with many operational things, if all we're doing is some kind of operational tactic, you're stuck with a sense of, "Well, now there's no crime in this area because I've got this deployment." And then there's pressure to move the deployment somewhere else, and then concomitant problems that that comes with.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely. When what we've found is that the original study remains true. The data is consistent and the crimes are still happening in the same foot patrol areas that we were dealing with at the beginning of the program. And so what we've done is used the model as an easy to implement flexible solution as we have different crime problems in the different foot patrol areas. Because new crime problems outside of those areas have not emerged.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. I haven't spoken to him about it. That must've been difficult for Cory Haberman to hear because he's the most straight shooting bloke I think I've ever come across.

Wendy Stiver:

Yes. And it's interesting because one of the specific areas we just reanalyzed because we're getting a lot of public pressure from the business community. It's the bus station. And the complaints actually were, when they really started calling me, they were upset about littering.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, there you go. Hashtag first world problems.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. Yeah. They were upset about littering.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's a great problem to have.

Wendy Stiver:

Exactly. And I said, "Well, that means all of our efforts have been successful because you're not complaining about shootings or robberies."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Crack cocaine problem's disappeared. And the opioid crisis is [crosstalk 00:15:37]. Yeah. Great.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. Now littering's a priority one and they want us to go down there and do more enforcement on littering. So it's become a persistent complaint.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the Tourism Bureau of Dayton, Ohio, where our biggest problem-

Wendy Stiver:

Is littering.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

...is littering.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. We went back and looked at, and we have the structure in place to go back and reevaluate and reanalyze these areas, and so we went back and looked at it. Crime has crept up in the downtown, but in this one specific area where there's all this attention and concern and these complaints, both the crimes and the calls for service have continuously declined over the last two years. And so we've got a big meeting coming up with the city manager and economic development and the business community and the bus station and the public school system. I'd ran into the city manager and I said, "Both the calls and the crimes are down."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That might help. It sounds like a good example of using data-driven evidence-based decision making.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There's a great solution though. Have a little bit more city money in guys picking up the trash.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely. And it's-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Certainly not the job for the cops to do, right?

Wendy Stiver:

Right. And it supports the project. It reinforces that the project, to begin with, was successful.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You were a LEADS scholar.

Wendy Stiver:

Theoretically. Yeah. On paper. I play one on television. Yes. I got accepted in the LEADS program in 2016.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Now this is the National Institute of Justice. Help me out with this. It's the Law Enforcement...

Wendy Stiver:

Advancing Data in Science.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Thank you.

Wendy Stiver:

You're welcome.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's a little torturous. LEADS is used for a bunch of things as an acronym.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. Which is why we adopted the nerd herd moniker.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The nerd herd.

Wendy Stiver:

Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You are now one of the policing policing slash academia nerd hood.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. Exactly. I believe we stole that from a television show without paying some kind of copyright.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How does that feel? What does that involve?

Wendy Stiver:

It's really exciting because I came in to in the third year of its existence. And so when I started, I believe that the program was really still developing. It's still developing now. It's really actually pretty cool that the National Institute of Justice and the people that have been managing this program have allowed it to evolve and define itself. And that's being done through different levels of participation by different LEADS scholars. They give us the opportunity to come together and to network with other police leaders who are like minded, also to network with and meet people in academia, in research fields.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You have my sympathies for that.

Wendy Stiver:

With the goal of bridging the divide between practitioners and researchers.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

On the plus side, I think you've got assigned to it Gary Cordner and Geoff Alpert.

Wendy Stiver:

Geoff Alpert. Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Which is the ultimate odd couple, right?

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. We like to think of them as our weird uncles. So we've got this program mentor, Maureen McGough at the National Institute of Justice, and then some other folks that are always there taking care of us. And then we've got our two weird uncles that show up everywhere we go.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Weird in a good way?

Wendy Stiver:

Weird in a good... Yes, definitely. Weird in a good way. So they've both been awesome to work with. But the biggest thing is there's this opportunity to attend at these conferences, to do presentations, to share the research work and exchange those ideas. But there's been another huge opportunity just in providing the support and motivation.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

How important has that been to be able to... You don't come from a huge agency. How many sworn in?

Wendy Stiver:

About 360 sworn officers.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

360.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So how beneficial has it been to discover that there are people in other agencies that are a part of the nerd herd as well, that care about the research, the data, the science, and moving the field of policing forward rather than just how we've always done it?

Wendy Stiver:

It's huge. It's huge because when you're in a command or staff position and you start looking at opportunities to make positive changes in your own agency, and you bring those to the table and you don't quite click with your colleagues, maybe-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They've not had the same exposure that you've had to these ideas.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. Right. Absolutely.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And some of them may be a bit stuck in their ways.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely. And so when that happens, there's this level of frustration that tends to come with that. And so there's a temptation to just quit. There's a temptation to quit bringing ideas to the table or to quit trying to do this in a police agency. And sometimes there's a lot of pressure to just conform.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And I'm sure that is the majority of cases for people anywhere if they don't have that opportunity, especially... The United States is covered in lots of relatively small agencies and there just isn't that capacity to build an internal momentum for change.

Wendy Stiver:

And I think there's the size of the agency or the nature of the agency, and then there's also a lot of other social and geographic, regional differences between agencies. I'm in the Midwest and so while I'm in a fairly progressive city, I'm still in the Midwest.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Which means...

Wendy Stiver:

We have lots of corn.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. I'm just wondering how anybody who's listening to this from policing and research outside of the US going, "What the hell does corn have to do with policing?"

Wendy Stiver:

So, you know-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

A lot of people just hit fast forward right at that moment.

Wendy Stiver:

I'm in Ohio. Ohio is actually... We have a lot of urban communities and we've got Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus. I'm in Dayton, which is between Cincinnati and Columbus.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But it's still relatively has a small town feel.

Wendy Stiver:

Yes. And it can be fairly conservative. And the mindset and approach to policing is often different than it might be on the East or West coast-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Or in other countries.

Wendy Stiver:

In other countries, in other cities like Madison, Wisconsin. There's a lot of different ideas and attitudes in Madison, Wisconsin. And I think a lot of... There are there agencies out there, medium sized agencies that are somewhat similar, but I think a lot of it, there are mindsets in college towns, a lot of access to education for the people in the agency.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And the capacity to have a degree of an intellectual discussion with people from outside the agency and bring them in and in a nonthreatening way.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely. And interest in the community in doing this type of work.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You're going to move to a different position with the LEADS program now.

Wendy Stiver:

I've been asked to work as a practitioner in residence at the National Institute of Justice.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That sounds super cool. So what are you actually going to be doing?

Wendy Stiver:

My city very graciously and my chief of police very graciously agreed to enter into this contract with NIJ and the city. They've come up with a shared parenting plan where I'll be splitting my time between Dayton and Washington DC, and I'll be somewhat mid-bi-coastal.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Who gets you on the weekends?

Wendy Stiver:

I'll be at your place probably. I don't know. So because of that, it's going to require a lot of traveling back and forth. But the idea was to identify a couple of key research areas.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Hopefully take the message of what's going on, especially around evidence-based policing and development of a more intellectual core within policing, to other departments.

Wendy Stiver:

Yes. And that's definitely one of the priorities of the program is to get this out there more, engage more agencies and bring them on board. I've started to realize that there's a strong need to really figure out how to create more capacity for it in agencies, to target officers earlier in their careers and start preparing them to embrace evidence-based policing. I'd really like to work on re-imagining what a police department looks like.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Where do you think the opportunities are? Is that in the promotion system? Is that in leadership models? From my perspective, I see a lot of policing just gets focused on the immediate and the now and the drama, and the longterm stuff that I think people actually joined the job for, which was to have a longterm impact on reducing crime and harm and disorder, gets overtaken by just the panic of events, which everybody gets excited by.

Wendy Stiver:

Crisis-led management. Yes, absolutely. And we get excited, but I mean, most police officers, what keeps us in the job is the work environment where you show up and you have no idea what's going to happen today. And so that crisis response is in our blood so we enjoy that to some extent. Longterm strategic planning tends to be a little bit outside of our comfort zone.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So stuff like the project that I know you've worked on, on the sub-critical incident response for officers who are going to stressful situations, is something that everybody recognizes as important, but I'm sure it gets easily forgotten because people are rushing from one drama to another.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. And there's some emerging ideas around the fact that we don't really understand we're talking about cumulative effect of those things.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And officer wellness is wrapped up in all of this. It can be a long, stressful career.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. But we don't really understand how much is frequent cumulative exposure. Is it one a day? Is it one a week? So we did a little bit of a quantitative analysis of some of our officers to actually see how much of these things they were being exposed to. And now we have a dataset that we're going to take another look at. We've had some behavioral issues or disciplinary issues with officers since we started that project. And so we want to go back and take a look at their exposures and compare them to the initial population.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I know you've not completed the analysis yet, but what's your gut sense of what you might be finding? And I know that's not a very evidence-based question but I'm still asking it.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah, I know. What we think we found was that some officers have a higher degree of dedication to their work unit, those that are there more consistently. And we think that there may be some potential that those officers might be at a greater risk than their peers who accept temporary assignments in other work units.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They feel a loyalty and a dedication to their colleagues, but now they're paying a price for it by being overexposed to stressful or just exhausting incidents.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. And so now I'm curious to see how those with disciplinary issues or behavioral issues compare to the sample size. And I have no idea who these officers are.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You're not bringing a subjective component to it. You're looking at the data that's available to any other agency. So the capacity to use your findings and then test more and more of these ideas with other departments is really high.

Wendy Stiver:

We're hoping to produce some kind of data points that might help to serve as a better early warning system.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What a great project in that the idea is to get ahead of these things and help the officer rather than wait until it's too late and then castigate or punish or criticize the officer in some way. Having been a cop in the eighties and the nineties, it's fantastic to see officer wellness becoming something that people are much more open and talking about now than they ever did before, I suppose.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. I think some of those cultural things that we've had in the past are still there. I was involved in a shooting in 2001 and we got three days off. We didn't sleep at all. And it was, "Go to the shrink. Tell the shrink what he wants to hear." And then the shrink signs off on your paperwork and you go back to work and it wasn't done very well. We've made a lot of changes in that regard and I'm happy to see that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And that kind of experience can be harmful.

Wendy Stiver:

Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think we're very rarely open to the idea that we have good intentions, but our good intentions can actually make things worse, not better, if we don't really test them out.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely. And I think that's huge too. And hopefully it creates an opportunity to go out to police officers and show them how evidence-based policing, how this research and these evidence-based ideas, -can create more opportunities to support them and help them in the way they want to be supported. And that might help break down some of those barriers and walls to doing more evidence based policing and research with police departments.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Projects like this, where you are looking at data, using evidence and science to help people in the most stressful parts of their career, are some of those worthwhile I can think of. I can't think of anybody better to be doing it, Wendy.

Wendy Stiver:

Oh, that's very kind of you, Jerry.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Thank you, mate. Appreciate it.

Wendy Stiver:

I really appreciate that, too.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Too much of modern policing seems like it's not evidence-driven and it is crisis-based.

Wendy Stiver:

Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But the problem now, we don't deal with crises very well. There was a police chief in the UK that said that leaders can be personally effective, but strategically weak. And that sounds about right to how we deal with crisis management.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. Well, and I think one of the biggest, I mean, the biggest hot button crisis in the United States has been these shooting incidents. We can do a lot of longterm strategic work in a police agency and then have a use of force or a deadly use of force incident, particularly if there's an issue of race or culture ingrained in that incident, that creates immediate crisis in our communities. And there's this idea that these things are inevitable, and I don't think that's the case. I think if you look at aviation, at the beginning of aviation somebody might've said, "Well, the planes are just going to crash. Some percentage of them are going to fall down out of the sky and that's inevitable." Aviation refused to accept that, and basically created evidence-based practices to analyze and study systems and improve on them.

Wendy Stiver:

I think there's a lot of opportunity in policing right now to start shifting our focus to some of these crisis incidents, police involved shootings, disparity in traffic stop data. So I think that there are real opportunities here to take evidence-based policing, to take these research practices and work on these problems from a strategic perspective outside of that crisis management mode and actually solve them.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. Once the emotion has dissipated momentarily, take the emotion out of it and bring the science in to advance the whole field.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. Look at these things the same way aviation looked at plane crashes and near misses. Because if you look at the result of that, aviation is allegedly the safest form of transportation in the world. Although-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, speaking as a pilot, I'm really glad it is.

Wendy Stiver:

Right. And I appreciate that too. But speaking as a passenger, I don't really enjoy when it becomes bumpy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But it doesn't all have to be either randomized studies either. You can have an incremental learning process, which is precisely what I've seen in the aircraft I've been flying over the last 20, 30 years. Where directives will come out that say, "This piece of equipment should be changed. This mechanism should be changed. This checklist would be better if it was different and done this way. It will skip this error." There are lots of different ways to incrementally get us to where we want to be, to be as safe as possible.

Wendy Stiver:

And if you think of a police car as the cockpit of an aircraft, or look at the equipment that police officers carry. When there's an error in the use of that equipment, when an officer mistakenly fires a gun instead of a taser, or there's a

failure in that equipment that leads to an unintended outcome or often a very tragic outcome, we can step back and use these approaches to analyze those events and improve the equipment, improve the cockpit, give the pilot better tools and minimize those situations. I think there's a lot of effort out there in some of the deescalation policies and some of the work that's been done in different police departments, perhaps not always paired with good analytical research. But at least there are people that are really strong, innovative leaders out there that are willing to try that. So we need to build the capacity.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And hat's off to them.

Wendy Stiver:

Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Because it's a risk for them, but what they're doing is they're taking a small risk to try new things and run the risk of failure, which isn't failure it's just, we haven't succeeded yet.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

But what they're doing is such a service to policing worldwide.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely. I have like this list of my personal heroes in police leadership that I've been following and have seen some really cool, innovative things. And then I also have these personal heroes in this police researching field and going back to that creating capacity, I think it just would be really amazing to create a police organization as a learning organization, much like we have teaching hospitals, and create opportunities to-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Or in the UK they have a College of Policing.

Wendy Stiver:

Yes. Exactly.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's having a few teething troubles, but that's normal with anything that's new. But what a splendid idea.

Wendy Stiver:

Absolutely.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What an audacious attempt to try and have a dramatic shift on the landscape of how we think about policing.

Wendy Stiver:

And that's really interesting because it's not quite been embraced in that manner in the United States, but I know many European countries, the training to become a police officer is basically a college education.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

In Norway it's years.

Wendy Stiver:

I know in Ohio it takes a lot longer to become a cosmetologist than it does to become a police officer.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think that is probably the most depressing statistic I've heard in a long time.

Wendy Stiver:

It takes two years to become a licensed cosmetologist in Ohio. And it's, I don't know, three months to become a police officer. Much more highly trained, I think, and have to pass more rigorous testing than some of our police officers do.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

To be fair, for some people it is life or death, right?

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. I think we have a lot of opportunity in front of us. And I think that the LEADS program, NIJ, hanging out with eggheads and meeting all these really wonderful people who are invested and care about policing and how we're doing things and giving us the tools to do better jobs in our community and it's exciting to be a part of it. And I'm really excited to see where it goes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And hopefully we'll see as many police officers coming to the American Society of Criminology, not that I'm totally recommending that, cherry picking the right presentations to see rather than some of the stuff that we have here, but also see more academics presenting at IACP and seeing everybody to gather together at the international, the national meetings of the Societies of Evidence-Based Policing, which is the perfect forum to get everybody together for this.

Wendy Stiver:

Yeah. And I think it is. That has been an interesting model to fuse together analysts and police leadership, police officers, academics, researchers, and students, really. It's inspiring to see so many students come to these events and see how interested they are in the future.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Wendy?

Wendy Stiver:

Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Thanks very much for your time.

Wendy Stiver:

Thank you, Jerry. I had a lovely time.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You've been listening to episode six of Reducing Crime recorded in November 2018. You can find more podcasts like this at reducingcrime.com or wherever you found this. New podcasts are announced on Twitter at [_reducingcrime](https://twitter.com/_reducingcrime). Don't forget the underscore. Be safe and best of luck.