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Community-Based Partnerships: Collaboration and Organizational Partnerships in Criminal Justice

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Introduction

The criminal justice system is multifaceted and complex. The criminal justice process involves various public agencies and their actors, private or nonprofit organizations, and the community. Sometimes, these are expanded to include researchers in researcher–practitioner partnerships. The wide array of partnerships involved in the justice process requires collaboration and communication. Unfortunately, the political nature of these organizations can sometimes make collaboration and communication difficult.

The current study reports on an examination of a variety of partnerships that can influence the jail population in a metropolitan county in Texas. The findings presented are derived from a jail use study designed to examine the potential use and overuse of the county jail, any potential for disproportionate minority contact (already occurring or in the future), and overuse of the jail for individuals with a diagnosed mental illness. The study examined a point of contact that has the potential to provide opportunities for intervention in the lives and families of individuals who become involved with the criminal justice system. The study allowed an examination of the relationships of several different justice system organizations and entities. These included the following: the county jail; the sheriff’s office; the county administration department; the more than 40 local police departments working in the county; representatives from the state workforce organization; a variety of community organizations (reentry organizations, domestic violence services organizations, mental health treatment facilities, and representatives of the faith community); the mental health response agency responsible for assessment and treatment in the jail; the prosecutor’s office; judges; the information technology department; the probation department; the court administration unit; the county clerk’s office; the defense bar; and other behavioral health and substance abuse treatment community representatives. Additionally, several individuals who participated in the study and process represented local, state, and federal policymakers and politicians. These groups came together to address concerns with use of the county jail. The study provided a rich context for examining how partnerships work in practice as well as mechanisms that might inform improved practices in the future.

The successful operation of the criminal justice system relies on a variety of partnerships. Despite their importance, little research has examined these partnerships in detail. Prior work has focused on individual “silos” in the criminal justice system (focusing, for example, only on policing, prosecutorial decision making, the court process, sentencing, and corrections), but it has not fully examined how these different

components work together. That is the focus of the current study, which is an exploratory effort to better understand the nature of these partnerships and the challenges that the agencies involved face in working together. Four key focal areas emerged over the course of the study: reducing conflict, enhancing communication, creating accountability for action, and navigating the political terrain.

Organizational Partnerships

Organizational partnership research examines the dynamics involved in and efficacy of a variety of organizational partnerships designed to achieve criminal justice outcomes. Organizational partnerships have emerged in response to the “governing-for-results” movement that has dominated public service agencies in recent years. The idea is that shared governance can be accomplished through the development of key partnerships across agencies and organizations (Vigoda, 2002; Rojek, Smith, & Alpert, 2012). The increased limitations imposed on criminal justice system agency budgets have required creative solutions in which agencies and organizations attempt to share resources to accomplish common goals. Of course, these governing-for-results partnerships are only a small component of the organizational partnerships that exist within the broader criminal justice system.

Coalition-type partnerships have been seen in community policing (e.g., Greene, 2001; Rojek et al., 2012; Skolnick & Bayley, 1986), crime prevention (e.g., Griffith et al., 2008; Kelly, Caputo, & Jamieson, 2005; Rosenbaum, 2002); substance abuse response (e.g., Fawcett et al., 1997); and domestic violence response (e.g., Ritchie & Eby, 2007; Sudderth, 2006). Community policing involves an organizational partnership linking the police agency, local community organizations, and the community at large. The goal of these partnerships is to identify and prioritize social problems affecting the local community and collaborate to develop successful solutions (Greene, 2001; Rojek et al., 2012; Skolnick & Bayley, 1986). Crime prevention partnerships seek to build relationships among different entities in an effort to reduce crime in local areas. These partnerships might bring together religious representatives (e.g., church, mosque, and synagogue leadership), community representatives, and police to respond to community violence and other, similar problems. The local gang initiative in the study site is an example of this type of collaboration to reduce violence and gang activity. Substance abuse response coalitions might include members of local religious communities, community representatives, substance abuse treatment providers, and behavioral health treatment providers to address concerns about prevalent

substance abuse challenges in the local community. Domestic violence coalitions often involve a wide array of local service providers, nonprofit organizations, and public criminal justice agencies in an effort to address the challenges faced by domestic violence survivors.

Most of the literature on community partnerships in criminal justice focuses on these types of coalitions – community partnerships that were developed in response to a specific area of concern. There is a gap in the literature with respect to the everyday partnerships that function (or that should function) to keep the criminal justice system working. The intraorganizational partnerships within the criminal justice system and interorganizational partnerships connecting that system to other agencies can have important effects on the way that the criminal justice system works. An examination of the role of researcher–practitioner partnerships highlights some of these challenges.

An important aspect of organizational partnerships relates to the intersections of organizational mandates. Within the criminal justice system, each organization or agency has a distinct organizational mandate. Manning (1997, 2010) examined the mandate for police organizations and provides the most nuanced example for the study of criminal justice system agencies. The organizational mandate outlines how criminal justice organizations “construct and maintain their claims to legitimacy and a degree of dramaturgical license” (Manning, 1997, p. 85). As such, Manning describes the police mandate as oriented primarily toward crime and crime fighting.

Manning (2010) expands on the discussion of the organizational mandate, examining it within the context of the broader criminal justice system and wider democratic society. In this work, Manning indirectly highlights the challenges that any criminal justice system will face in working in a collaborative environment and developing partnerships and collaborations. Each mandate is unique, and many of the organizational mandates within the criminal justice system operate in opposition to each other (sometimes in adversarial ways, as seen with prosecution offices and public defender offices). These organizational mandates expand and contract in response to changing societal needs and efforts to create public value, as discussed in Moore (1995). Although the development of collaborations and partnerships has been addressed in the organizational and management literature, the studies have focused on collaborations in which there is a clearly stated shared goal and no requirements for an adversarial process such as the one that characterizes the criminal justice system. For example, the work done in emergency services, public safety (police–fire services consolidation, shared services), public health,

education, medicine, and transportation is not applicable because of the different collaborative environment. The criminal justice system is adversarial by design, resulting in significant challenges in developing multi-agency and multi-organization partnerships and collaborations. The challenges often arise from the widely disparate mandates that these organizations must maintain and control. Such challenges are the focus of the current paper.

During this brief examination of the literature on organizational partnerships and coalitions in criminal justice, an important gap in the extant literature emerged. Prior work on these partnerships has focused on those partnerships that have arisen for specific purposes – specific community needs or evaluation needs. Little research has been done on how the partnerships that are built into the criminal justice system *by design* operate (or fail to operate successfully). The focus of the current study is to elaborate on how these partnerships work in practice, the challenges they face, the challenges presented by disparate organizational mandates, and the effect that the challenges may have on local communities.

Study Site

This study took place in a metropolitan county in Texas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (n.d.), the county had a population of just over 1.8 million individuals in 2010. That number is approaching 2 million today. As of the 2010 census, the county population was 51.8% non-Hispanic or Latino White, 14.9% Black, and 26.7% Hispanic or Latino. Of the county residents, 15.7% are foreign-born, with 27.8% speaking a language other than English at home. Education levels in the county reflect that 84.7% of the residents have at least a high school diploma and that 29.7% of the residents have a bachelor's degree or higher (among individuals 25 years of age or older). The median household income is \$57,727, and 15.2% of individuals live under the poverty threshold.

The county jail has a capacity of just under 5,000 individuals. There are also several city jails, but these were not analyzed as a part of the study reported here. The county jail population varied from lows of approximately 3,300 individuals to highs of more than 3,500 individuals. Of these, on average approximately 200 had already been sentenced for felonies and approximately 200 had already been sentenced for misdemeanors. Additionally, on average between 700 and 800 individuals were under mental health supervision and were receiving mental health care in the jail.¹

Methods

This was a qualitative study. Data collection included participant observation at criminal justice coordinating committee and subcommittee meetings, focus groups, surveys of criminal justice system stakeholders and policymakers, and jail use data collection. The criminal justice coordinating committee meeting observations included taking field notes at monthly meetings. The meetings began with a discussion of a key issue of interest, with a formal presentation by an agency or research representative, and then proceeded to a roundtable discussion of key updates and areas of concern. The notes encompassed 10 meetings conducted over the course of 1 year. Data from all meetings were collected systematically, with at least two researchers taking notes for all meetings.

Subcommittee meetings were attended, and field notes were recorded for each meeting. There were three formal subcommittee meetings and two informal meetings on mental health. There were two formal subcommittee meetings related to the pretrial stage of adjudication and two meetings related to substance use concerns. There were two meetings related to recidivism and reentry. Focus group meetings were held following each of the subcommittee meetings. A total of nine focus group sessions took place, with eight to eighteen participants in each focus group. Again, notes were collected by two researchers and compiled for analysis.

Three surveys were sent out to key stakeholders and policymakers in the county criminal justice system agencies and community organizations. The first survey focused on mental health concerns in the criminal justice system. The second survey focused on concerns with the pretrial stage of the criminal justice process. The third survey focused on recidivism and reentry concerns. All surveys had questions regarding communication processes and challenges in the criminal justice system as well as questions about coordination and cooperation across various justice system entities. The surveys were used as an alternate way for those who did not have a chance to voice their views in subcommittee meetings and/or focus groups, or who did not feel comfortable doing so, to provide feedback regarding key issues discussed. Each survey had a section with a series of open-ended questions related to the strengths and weaknesses of the criminal justice system in general and in each area, as well as questions about various aspects of the system. The answers to these questions formed the basis for some of the findings presented in this paper. Survey participants included all individuals on the list of identified stakeholders (administrative leaders of all involved organizations)

provided by the county. The surveys were sent to all 136 identified stakeholders via e-mail. The response rates for the first, second, and third surveys were 50.74%, 55.15%, and 42.65%, respectively. In some cases, individuals returned e-mails indicating that they did not feel that their position provided the expertise necessary to participate in a particular survey (reducing the response rates).

The data analysis began with the transcription of meeting dialogues and notes (from committee and subcommittee meetings), focus group notes and dialogues, and qualitative questions and their responses from the surveys. Once transcribed, these documents were imported to NVivo software. An emic approach was used to code the items with respect to collaboration and partnerships. (No preexisting codes were followed; instead, the codes emerged from the analysis in an effort to avoid imposing preexisting views on subject responses.) A qualitative, grounded theory approach was used to allow the codes to emerge from the data.ⁱⁱ Data collection began in September of 2015 and continued through August of 2016. Analysis was started in January of 2016 and continued for the duration of the project.

Findings

Analysis of the qualitative responses to the surveys combined with field notes from the subcommittee meetings, focus groups, and criminal justice coordinating committee meetings resulted in four emergent themes. The first of these themes was a need to reduce conflict between entities that view themselves as in competition. The second key theme was the importance of improving and/or enhancing communication between different agencies and actors. The third theme was the need to hold actors, agents, and agencies accountable for actions and promises or commitments. The final theme was a thread that ran through all aspects of the project – a need for all agents to learn to navigate the political terrain. The sections that follow discuss each of these themes in detail.

Reducing Conflict

The first key theme to emerge in this project was the need to reduce conflict among entities that see themselves in competition. Many of the different organizations (public, private, and nonprofit) viewed themselves as competing with other agencies or organizations. These feelings of competition emerged along several dimensions. The bail bondsmen saw themselves as competing with the pretrial services division and attorneys (who can provide attorney bonds during pretrial). The prosecution office was viewed as a source of conflict by nearly every other agency involved.

Many of the community reentry organizations also saw themselves as competing with one another. The following quote highlights how this sense of competition and the need to “own” the solution emerged in presentations and meetings:

We [reentry services organization] are doing a great job. We have served nearly 600 people since we started. We are providing a great service. I can assure you that we have identified EVERY resource that an individual needs when they return to the community. Our list is exhaustive, and we have found all of it. I can provide any person who walks through the door of our building everything they need to get back on their feet and not return to jail or prison.

This is one of many examples of how agency and organization representatives would talk about the great job they are doing in an attempt to “sell” their organization to the funders (politicians) in the room, or to their representatives.

The constant need to say “my organization is doing everything and there is no room for improvement” limited the ability of the organizations involved to brainstorm critically and identify key problems that needed to be addressed during meetings. Furthermore, it limited the ability of the criminal justice coordinating committee to identify useful solutions. Although these persons meant well and were likely just trying to do the right thing, the fear of competition and inability to allow others to contribute to solutions in a collaborative way seriously hindered the progress of the committee’s work. It is essential that organizations involved in partnerships and collaborations work to reduce this conflict so that great ideas and solutions can emerge.

Another element that contributed to the conflicts was the language used. The partners and collaborators at the table ranged from police and law enforcement representatives to politicians, from psychology professionals to religious leaders, from attorneys and judges to former convicts. In many instances, conflict was exacerbated by the lack of a shared language. The individuals with a legal background (attorneys and judges) would often speak in terms of legal codes that others did not understand. The law enforcement officials frequently used “police jargon” that is not easily understood outside the profession. The mental health professionals used jargon unique to their field. In the attempt to find common ground, this problem often hindered conversation. The situation was analogous to putting a group of people in the same room with some speaking English, others Spanish, some French, others German, and

some Russian and expecting them to brainstorm and work together to solve problems. The first barrier that needs to be overcome is the lack of a common language, which often prevents progress in meetings.

Conflict also emerged when representatives of various agencies with different aims and objectives could not find common ground. For example, the representatives from the prosecutor's office often created conflict by indicating that creative responses were not in line with legal codes. The following exchange, which occurred during a discussion about a proposal to use risk assessments during pretrial to attempt to have individuals released from jail who do not need to be there is informative:

Person 1: Risk assessments would allow us to determine who needs to be kept in the jail and the individuals who really do not need to be there.

Person 2: Risk assessments are not legal. If I were a defense attorney, I would never allow anyone to do this risk assessment on my client. It could violate their rights.

Person 3: But a risk assessment is not collecting information on the facts of the case. It is looking at the resources an individual has access to and their level of risk to the public to make an informed decision about release.

Person 2: No. You can't do that. Under state law, any person other than an individual who committed a capital crime has to have access to bond.

Person 1: Right. We are trying to give people who can't afford the bail bondsman access to bonds.

Person 4: Your organization just wants to compete with us. You need to stop trying to take our clients. You are going to put us out of business.

This conversation continued for over 30 minutes with no resolution and no common language or solutions developed. The sessions were sometimes incredibly tense for the participants and the researcher as little productive work was done; the meetings were mostly arguing.

Reducing the types of conflicts that have been highlighted here could assist the various partners and coalition members in making progress. Such conflicts often caused the partners to stop contributing. At one point, the conflicts resulted in the work ending and the participants indicating that they would never make any progress (so why bother?). It is essential for organizational partnerships to work together to overcome feelings of conflict and competition and to see others as partners in a

shared vision. This would allow productive brainstorming and problem solving that could benefit not only the partners involved but also the individuals, families, and communities that they serve. In too many cases, it appeared that the individuals involved had lost sight of the goal of the committee's work.

Enhancing Communication

A second key theme to emerge in the analysis was the importance of communication. One of the biggest challenges that was noted repeatedly was a lack of communication or limited communication between groups. During one subcommittee meeting, two different organizations within the criminal justice system realized that they had been doing the same job. This had been going on for several years before an innocent question from a third party in the meeting led to the revelation that they were both doing the same thing. The two agencies worked together to divide the labor and share the information once this situation had come to light.

As discussed in the previous section on reducing conflict, the development of a common language is essential in enhancing communication between groups, agents, and organizations if collaborations and partnerships are to be successful. This goal is particularly challenging when members of different organizational cultures, each with its unique jargon, come together to solve a problem that somehow involves an aspect of each organization's area of expertise. Many of the communication challenges were a result of the groups' failure to understand that they were saying the same things, but with different language or jargon.

Much of the work of the criminal justice system is information-driven and information-dependent. This fact became increasingly apparent as the interactions of emerging partnerships and collaborations were observed. A key challenge that emerges from an information-driven context is that many agencies do not want to share information with others, and some agencies do not know how to share information or what information others might like to have. Furthermore, agencies may not know that others are collecting information that they might need. In many instances, discussions revealed that information that one group really needed but did not know how to access was being collected by another group. Once these conversations developed, it became clear that a way to share the information or data could be developed. Such conversations are essential if the agencies in the criminal justice system are to change from independent silos in competition with one another to a cohesive system in which they work together.

It is also important that in any partnership or collaboration the involved organizations and their representatives develop strategies to make the communication last. Several of the survey responses indicated that individuals did not feel that the communication would last beyond the study efforts:

A key challenge is we will never continue these conversations once this study is over. People are just doing this to look good for the study. It will go back to business as usual once you people are gone. These people don't want to work together. They will do it for one project, but then they quit talking to each other until the next thing comes up. You can't sustain this kind of thing. When new people take over the agencies none of this lasts. Why bother and who cares? I feel like all of this is a waste of my time.

These comments reveal a frustration with the lack of sustainability in the collaborations and partnerships. Ongoing and continued communication is needed if the collaboration and partnerships are to be sustained. The observations of this study indicate that a key component of successful continued collaboration and partnerships is clear and continued communication. Beyond shared language, there is a need for actors working in the different areas of the system to develop respect for the various agencies and organizations. The lack of mutual respect often hinders communication.

Creating Accountability

An important theme that emerged was the need to create accountability for action. As one survey respondent said:

With so many different people, so many different agencies, and so many different organizations involved, how can we possibly hold people accountable? It is too easy for people to say, "I expected so-and-so to do this."

Several people commented during the focus group meetings (particularly as we were wrapping up and people were leaving) that it is difficult to get organizations to deliver on their promises when you have so many different groups coming together. One recommended solution that emerged was the development and use of MOUs (Memoranda of Understanding) to create a sort of contractual obligation that allows people to be held accountable for their contributions to change.

The lack of accountability also emerged in a slightly different way. In several instances, the subcommittees would brainstorm and develop new and innovative ideas for potential solutions to identified problems. These ideas were then out there and recorded in the notes from the meeting, but at the next meeting or in the coordinating committee meeting they were not brought up again. A lot of time was devoted to coming up with ideas, but there was no accountability for follow-through on those ideas. This challenge is not unique to partnerships, but a lack of cohesive oversight can make the situation more likely. A mechanism holding the subcommittees of the collaboration accountable for action might have produced different results.

Managing the Political Terrain

The final theme that emerged in the partnership and collaboration aspect of the study was the importance of finding ways to navigate the political terrain. Many of the agencies involved were headed by or included elected politicians. Additionally, many of the funding decisions were made by political bodies. This meant that organizations had to find a way to work together to navigate both internal and external politics. The criminal justice system involves many different political actors. Many judges are elected, the district attorney or lead prosecutor is typically elected, the sheriff is often elected, and the mayors, county commissioners, and officials of the courts that make funding decisions are all elected. The criminal justice system is heavily politicized.

For any work to be accomplished or changes to be made within the criminal justice system, you must have buy-in from the political actors, which can be problematic when agencies and their representatives are balancing legal mandates with the desire to do the right thing within a political environment. This situation was another major source of conflict in the study. Additionally, an undercurrent was noted related to the need to understand who was funding political campaigns and to understand the power attached to such relationships. For example, it was revealed that the bail bondsmen had contributed to the campaigns of the county judge and commissioner. This created difficulties for individuals trying to make progress when the bail bondsmen did not agree with their actions or ideas. Such dynamics can be very challenging for collaborations, and individuals attempting large-scale partnerships need to understand the political undertones of their decisions.

The organizational partnerships involved in the criminal justice system required self-reflection on the part of the agents involved. Whenever the agents could identify that they and their political interests

were at odds with the work of the partnership (or, at the very least, whenever they tried to reconcile the conflict), a barrier to success was eliminated. In many cases, the agents put themselves or their political interests before the work of the community partnership, seriously hindering the progress of the collaborative.

A final note related to navigating the political terrain is important. At the start of this type of partnership and collaboration, it is essential to ask the following question: How can we address political differences to allow success? In many instances, the partners' ideas were stuck with labels of "conservative," "liberal," "progressive," "socialism," and "social justice." If one member of the partnership labeled an idea with one of these terms, the discussion of the idea would occasionally end because some did not want to be associated with concepts or proposals that could be considered "socialist" or "social justice" approaches. These terms were sometimes used to kill ideas that might have been beneficial if they had been adequately discussed. This is another instance of political differences possibly preventing success. It is important for those involved in partnerships to consider these challenges to increase the probability of success. Additionally, competition between different agencies and organizations can hinder the ability to develop successful collaborations and partnerships and can undermine efforts to change the system status quo.

Discussion and Conclusions

This paper has discussed the key challenges that emerge in large-scale criminal justice system partnerships. The four key themes that emerged in the analyses for the current study were these: the need to manage conflict; the importance of developing, facilitating, and sustaining communication; the need to create systems of accountability; and the need for partners to work together to navigate the political terrain. These themes emerged over the course of a 1-year qualitative study of the contributions of the criminal justice system to jail use and overuse.

This study faced some limitations, as most studies do. The time frame for data collection was limited to 1 year. It is essential that further research examine the criminal justice system and partnerships between justice system agencies and with community organizations beyond the justice system in more detail. Prior research has focused on one silo at a time while examining the criminal justice system. It is important for future research to consider the broader context of the full criminal justice system and the nuances that link different justice system agencies and organizations in key partnerships.

It is important to address the implications of these challenges for (1) the criminal justice system in general and (2) local communities, residents, and families. Essentially, for the criminal justice system to operate successfully, it should operate as a series of partnerships, theoretically speaking. The various actors and agencies in the criminal justice system should work together to produce outcomes that reflect democratic principles and justice. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the way in which the criminal justice system operates. Many of the organizations, agencies, and agents view themselves as in competition with the other organizations, agencies, and agents in the system (and outside it). This traditionally competitive and adversarial nature of the criminal justice system creates a situation in which attempts at partnerships and collaboration are often challenging at best. Recognizing these challenges at the start of a collaborative project would serve to enhance the ability of the criminal justice system to work in a way that produces justice for those it serves (including victims, offenders, agents, families, and communities).

The four themes that emerged in the analysis can be connected to the key focus of this paper: the challenges to partnerships and collaboration that are introduced by competing organizational mandates. As discussed previously, most of the organizational partnerships studied either focus on a smaller specific goal (e.g., police–fire services consolidation, shared services partnerships) or are based on cooperative mandates (e.g., public health–private health–medical sector collaborations, education–public health collaborations). The challenge of the criminal justice system is that the various agency and organizational mandates are not cooperative but rather are often competitive or adversarial in nature. The system is not designed for cooperation; it is designed to encourage protection of the rights of victims, offenders, witnesses, and the state. The focus of a police department mandate is often related to crime fighting and crime control, whereas the focus of county administration might be to keep costs down (and keep incarceration rates manageable and affordable). The focus of the prosecutor’s office is to secure guilty verdicts for individuals guilty of crimes, whereas the focus of a public defender’s office is to protect the rights of the accused.

The problematic effects of conflicting mandates on collaboration to reach common goals were seen in the four themes that emerged in this study: reducing conflict, enhancing communication, creating accountability for action, and navigating and managing the political terrain. The system must work constantly to balance the rights and needs of those victimized, the rights and needs of the accused or convicted, and the interests of the

state and public. This balance is not easily achieved and indicates a need to work to achieve justice in all criminal justice system actions and outcomes. It is essential to recognize that criminal justice system partnerships – particularly community partnerships – must focus on just outcomes beyond those related to victims and offenders.

Solutions to the challenges identified for criminal justice system partnerships need to be identified as the effect of the justice system is far-reaching and extends beyond victims and offenders. Families and communities are also negatively affected by an individual's involvement in the criminal justice system. The consequences of criminal justice system action (or lack thereof) can extend, for example, into domains such as economic security and stability, public health, mental health, education, housing, and employment. These effects extend beyond victims and offenders to their families and communities, creating a challenging network of problems that need to be addressed. Two solutions may be recommended based on the existing literature related to organizational management and mandates.

Manning (2010, p. vii) states: "The police as an organization and policing as a practice are embedded in the supporting institutions of a democracy, and can sustain or erode the quality of democratic life." Manning recommends that the focus of policing be on policing according to the difference principle. This indicates that policing would act to increase equality and reduce inequalities in society. If the concepts he outlines are expanded to apply to the broader criminal justice system, a context could be created in which adversarial organizations work together to create democratic outcomes.

Moore (1995) highlights the need for organizational representatives to work creatively to create public value through the expansion and contraction of their mandates. Organizations that can see beyond the narrow confines of their currently defined mandates can successfully navigate adversarial contexts. This was seen during the current research when competing entities had to come together to address the challenges created by the intersections of mental health and the criminal justice system.

There is clear potential for various criminal justice system agencies and organizations to find creative solutions to community problems. The development of strong partnerships and collaborations would be a step in the right direction – and these are seen in some areas. The findings from this study reveal that for continued and sustainable success, agencies should focus on reducing conflict, facilitating successful communication, developing clear accountability mechanisms, and working to navigate the

political terrain (in an effort to reduce feelings of conflict and competition). This includes finding ways to reduce feelings that agencies and organizations are in competition for resources and facilitating mutual respect despite the adversarial nature of the criminal justice system. The benefits of these efforts would likely extend beyond the criminal justice system to families and communities.

The actions and decisions made in these partnerships extend into the community and families. Removing an accused person from his or her household can remove a source of income for a family, support for children in school, and economic support and contributions to the local community. These effects should be considered when the justice of the actions of these partnerships is discussed. Partnerships that can simultaneously achieve justice for victims of crime while balancing justice for families affected by justice system involvement will have a significant positive effect in the local community and beyond.

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ⁱ Jail data collected from January 1, 2010, through May 31, 2016. Findings presented here reflect these numbers.

ⁱⁱ Although it would be informative to discuss the roles of those who were in attendance or where meetings were held, it is not possible to do so in this report. Identifying either of these would make it possible to identify the research participants individually and would be in violation of IRB protocols.