

**Inter-Organizational Relationships and  
Law Enforcement Information Sharing Post-September 11, 2001**

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**Abstract**

The lack of information sharing among law enforcement agencies leading up to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks has been well documented. An emphasis on interaction among law enforcement agencies with other government and private sector organizations has been reinforced in contemporary counter-terrorism efforts. Despite this emphasis, very little is known with respect to which law enforcement agencies are collaborating with which public works and private sector organizations to fulfill this critical mission gap. The present research utilizes two federally-funded national surveys to explore the collaborative relationships between law enforcement, other government organizations, and private sector organizations. Findings suggest collaboration across sectors exists, however it appears significant room for improvement remains.

*Keywords:* Information sharing, Intelligence, Fusion centers, Relationships, Policing

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## **Inter-Organizational Relationships and Law Enforcement Information Sharing Post-9/11<sup>1</sup>**

*“[B]ut the truth of the matter is, nobody bats 1,000, and I think as a nation we need to come to terms with it and do everything we can to prevent it, but also recognize that fusion centers and intelligence...are part of our future.”*

- Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis,  
Testifying before the House Committee on Homeland Security, May 9, 2013

### **Inter-Organizational Relationships among Law Enforcement**

Organizations develop external relationships for a host of reasons, ranging from political to resourceful to tactical. For context of the current discussion, law enforcement utilizes relationships with external organizations as a tactical means to achieve desired ends; to prevent and mitigate threats of terrorism and crime. Such external organizations included (but are not limited to) public health, private security, and transportation organizations as well as multiple federal entities. In August 2011, the White House published a document titled *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* that specifically outlined the need to develop and sustain relationships across all sectors within U.S. communities to prevent acts of terrorism. Specifically, this initiative identified the need for government to:

...not narrowly build relationships around national security issues alone...there are instances when the government needs to build new relationships to address security issues, but these must be predicated upon multifaceted engagement...local, state, and tribal governments; prison officials; and law enforcement must receive intelligence based on, research, and accurate information...(5-6)

These partnerships are at the heart of successful information sharing for law enforcement intelligence and threat prevention; whether the threat is terrorism, extremism, crime, health epidemic, or natural disaster. It is important to note that national security intelligence and law enforcement intelligence vary in concept and practice. The current research focuses on law

enforcement intelligence as it relates to terrorism, threats, and crimes. National security intelligence is not interchangeable within the context provided here.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, the present research focuses on law enforcement information sharing relationships post September 11, 2001 (hereafter 9/11) as this was arguably the transformational point in law enforcement intelligence practices.

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (2004) presented their findings in what is known as the “9/11 Commission Report.” In sum, this report concluded that information sharing failures were ubiquitous across all levels of law enforcement leading up to the attacks. A litany of initiatives was taken in response to the recommendations outlined in the report; two of which are central to the current discussion. First, in building the homeland security enterprise, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security created what are known as fusion centers to facilitate the sharing of information and intelligence across jurisdictions and sectors. Second, state and local law enforcement were expected to participate in this new information sharing environment. Their role was to actively collect, analyze, and disseminate information and intelligence. Unfortunately, no valid metrics are readily available to assess where law enforcement was with regard to information sharing prior to 9/11; nor do such metrics exist currently at the state and local law enforcement agency level.

Based on reports published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2011) and the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security (2013), law enforcement is in a more advantageous and operationally effective position today, with regards to information sharing, as compared to pre-9/11. Based on the subjectivity of this progress (see U.S. Senate, 2012) and the metrics used, more specific information regarding information sharing practices

among state and local law enforcement is sorely needed to establish a reliable evidence base for drawing conclusions about what progress has or has not occurred. Unfortunately, there is no baseline data from before 9/11 to compare the metrics presented in this research.

In conjunction with these reports, the extant literature is beginning to understand the philosophy and operations of law enforcement intelligence; however gaps remain related to these relationships. This research seeks to inform this gap. The findings to follow are not intended to be a parsimonious test of theory. The knowledge base regarding law enforcement intelligence generally, and law enforcement relationships for information sharing more specifically, is dramatically uninformed. Empirical information to date regarding such relationships has been drawn from two individual states – South Carolina (Cooney *et al.* 2011) and New Jersey (Ratcliffe and Walden 2010). Findings presented here are intended to shed light into the black box of law enforcement information sharing relationships post 9/11.

### **Information Sharing**

The philosophy through which information sharing and intelligence fit into state and local law enforcement is intelligence-led policing. While there is no universally accepted definition of intelligence-led policing, the following definition perhaps best illustrates the conceptualization of the philosophy:

The collection and analysis of information related to crime and conditions that contribute to crime, resulting in an actionable intelligence product intended to aid law enforcement in developing tactical responses to threats and/or strategic planning related to emerging or changing threats (Carter and Carter 2009a, 317).

The *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan* posits all agencies, regardless of size, must have an intelligence-led policing capability (Global Intelligence Working Group 2003) yet there is no common denominator as to what an intelligence-led policing capability constitutes for

agencies of different size and responsibility. Intuition would assert that a larger police agency should have a more comprehensive intelligence capacity than a smaller agency (i.e. more resources and a demand to develop this capability). While this is an appropriate assumption, it is not appropriate to automatically consider a small police agency's "basic" intelligence-led capability as being insufficient. An agency's intelligence-led policing capability need only be as advanced as the responsibilities that agency requires. For most local agencies in the U.S., the most important component of intelligence-led policing is having established relationships with external organizations and the community they serve; whether they are formal or informal.

This approach is well tailored as a tool to combat terrorism (McGarrell, Chermak, and Freilich 2007) as well as street crimes that represent the majority of state and local law enforcement responsibilities (Darroch and Mazerolle 2013; Ratcliffe 2008). In order to be successful, intelligence-led policing depends on strong relationships with citizens, businesses, and organizations that comprise the communities they protect. Threats of terrorism and crime will continue to be a critical responsibility for the police as will the need for community support. Moreover, with increased social tension as a result of homeland security and counter-terrorism initiatives (Moynihan 2005), the need is even greater to maintain a close, interactive dialogue between law enforcement and the community. This is best achieved through established community policing skills in many law enforcement officers that directly support intelligence-led policing responsibilities (Carter and Carter 2009a). Such skills include problem solving, environmental scanning, effective communications with the public, fear reduction, and community mobilization to deal with problems (Haarr 2001).

Preliminary research indicates the most effective method for law enforcement to achieve active relationships across external organizations is to establish an information liaison officer

program (U.S. House of Representatives 2013). Based on the *National Response Framework* (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2008), *Fusion Center Guidelines* (Global Intelligence Working Group 2005) and *Baseline Capabilities for Fusion Centers* (Global Intelligence Working Group 2008), these programs – at a minimum – should include relationships with fire, emergency medical, public health, and the private sectors. In the most basic programs, intelligence liaison officers serve as a point of contact to collect and disseminate information and products to and from the community. Intelligence-led policing is the programmatic function by which information sharing fits at the agency-level fits into the greater law enforcement intelligence landscape. The effectiveness of intelligence-led policing is enhanced through the utilization of a contemporary addition to the policing infrastructure post-9/11; information sharing facilities known as “fusion centers.”

### ***Fusion Centers***

Every state in the U.S., as well as Puerto Rico, has at least one official fusion center while many states have multiple centers (U.S. House of Representatives 2013). These centers are designed to increase the exchange of information and data across government and private sectors to enhance law enforcement’s ability to fight crime and terrorism and prevent threats (Global Intelligence Working Group 2005). From an infrastructure perspective, fusion centers are perhaps the most salient difference between pre- and post-9/11 policing. Each center is a composition of multiple organizations across law enforcement, public works, and the private sector. Diversification of the personnel that comprise these centers is believed to enhance information flow to and from the streets (Carter and Carter 2009b). The relationship between intelligence-led policing and fusion centers is reinforced by the *National Strategy for Homeland*

*Security* that identifies the intelligence-led policing philosophy and fusion center capabilities as the primary tools to combat terrorism and threats to the U.S (Homeland Security Council 2006).

There is no single model for a fusion center, namely because of the diverse needs and environmental characteristics that affect the structure, processes, and products of such a center. A Congressional Research Service report notes that in light of the growth of the fusion centers in state and local jurisdictions without a coordinated national plan, “there appears to be no ‘one-size-fits-all’ structural or operational model for fusion centers” (Rollins 2008, 18). Though there is debate regarding the efficacy of fusion centers and their optimal model for success (Taylor and Russell 2012), the most effective model is likely one driven by local law enforcement needs. As noted by Johnson and Dorn (2008, 38) in describing the New York State Intelligence Center,

“Creating one center for intelligence and terrorism information, to combine and distribute that information to law enforcement agencies statewide, prevents duplication of effort by multiple agencies. Additionally, one state fusion center serving the entire New York law enforcement community provides a comprehensive picture of criminal and terrorists networks, aids in the fight against future terrorists events and reduces crime.”

### ***Preparedness***

At the outset, care must be given to the conceptual underpinning of what preparedness relationships are intended to provide in the law enforcement context. Unlike relationships with federal and state organizations, preparedness relationships are a function for disaster management, response, and mitigation. These relationships are obviously not independent of sharing information for purposes of counter-terrorism, threats, and crimes, but are more planning-oriented than threat-oriented. Law enforcement interact with emergency management, public health, transportation, critical infrastructure, fire, and public works organizations to primarily develop response plans. Throughout this process, relationships are established that can

lead to information sharing for other purposes – such as fire department personnel reaching out to police personnel to alert them of suspicious activity.

### ***Private Sector and Public Health***

The Program Manager’s Information Sharing Environment (2006) observed that the private sector can be a rich resource of information, which adds a broadened dimension to information collection. Many large corporations have sophisticated security operations that monitor global threats to their facilities, products, and personnel, as posed by organized crime, criminal extremists, and predatory criminals (National Infrastructure Advisory Council 2008). This type of information is often different from that collected by law enforcement organizations, and it can add a unique, more insightful component to the body of information being analyzed by the fusion center. Similarly, the private sector is a legitimate consumer of law enforcement intelligence, meeting the “right to know” and “need to know” information-sharing standards. For example, the private sector owns 85% of the critical infrastructure in the United States (Homeland Security Advisory Council 2006). Moreover, the private sector has a large personnel force that, if given the proper training, can significantly increase the eyes and ears on the street to observe and report suspicious activity. As noted in one of the best practices papers produced by the Department of Homeland Security, a jurisdiction’s analysis entity, such as a fusion center, should establish processes for sharing information with the local private sector (Lessons Learned Information Sharing 2005).

State and local law enforcement’s role in public health has largely pertained to preparedness and emergency response. Following the *National Response Framework* published by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2008), in the event of an emergency incident,



local law enforcement serves as the initial response mechanism in a multi-layered response approach. A department's ability to respond effectively to any emergency - public health or otherwise - greatly depends on its preparedness which relies on the law enforcement agency's strategic planning and its partnerships. The emphasis on strategic planning and partnerships is the dimension of law enforcement's role in public health that has recently begun to evolve. Rather than operationalizing planning and partnerships as a means to solely improve first-responding, law enforcement has begun efforts to identify proactive measures via public health information sharing; such as collaboration between biological detecting systems and fusion centers (Carter and Rip 2013).

The Police Executive Research Forum published a series of guides to help improve the law enforcement response to public health emergencies. In short, these guides emphasized the importance of law enforcement communication with public health organizations, other public safety agencies, and the community (Brito, Luna, and Sanberg 2009) and strategic planning for the prevention and mitigation of public health events (Sanberg *et al.* 2010). Such communication is achieved through partnerships and liaison officer programs. Local law enforcement serves as a force-multiplier with respect to information collection. Primarily through community policing, police officers are able to gather raw information and recognize indicators and warnings of threats – a somewhat grass-roots level of epidemiological surveillance. This micro-level information is critical to identifying accurate threat pictures and is relied upon by fusion centers and thus public health organizations as well.

Integrating private and public health organizations into the law enforcement information sharing and intelligence arena is not without its obstacles. In terms of private organizations, certain types of personal information may be inappropriate for law enforcement to release to the

private sector. Similarly, the private sector is concerned that proprietary information related to corporate products may be inappropriately released or requested during due process. With respect to public health, officials are hesitant to share information as it may violate Health Insurance Portability and Accountability privacy laws. Despite these limitations and concerns, there exists a legitimate role for the private sector and public health in the information sharing environment.

### **Research Design and Methods**

The present study utilizes two national surveys of information sharing practices that were conducted with two different samples of key personnel. These surveys were part of a larger research project funded by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice<sup>3</sup>. The first survey sample consisted of state and local law enforcement personnel tasked to develop and sustain an intelligence capacity for their individual agencies. The second sample consisted of personnel from regional and state fusion centers that serve as the key component in their state and major urban area intelligence infrastructures. Both sets of data are unique from the perspective that they represent information contained by a relatively small sample of specific law enforcement personnel; those persons that work in the intelligence and information sharing function of their agency.

#### ***Data***

The sample of law enforcement personnel included individuals who had attended a national training program<sup>4</sup> funded by the Department of Homeland Security. This sampling strategy was chosen for multiple reasons. By attending this training, these personnel were

identified by their respective agency as a representative of the intelligence function within the agency. These persons are also most likely to be the personnel who have direct knowledge and a working understanding of key issues related to intelligence and information sharing – thus they are most knowledgeable about the practices of interest. Empirical research exploring law enforcement intelligence issues has been severely hampered by a lack of access to, and unwillingness to participate by, intelligence personnel within agencies (see Chermak *et al.* 2013). Moreover, ideal surveying methods – such as random sampling – are not feasible given the fidelity of intelligence practices nationwide. Not every law enforcement agency in the country is actively engaged in information sharing and intelligence practices (Carter and Phillips 2013), thus a targeted sample is required.

Virtually all intelligence research to date (post-9/11) has been conducted based on purposive samples where the researchers had an existing relationship with the intelligence personnel (see Cooney *et al.* 2011; Cope 2004; Darroch and Mazerolle 2013; Graphia-Joyal 2010; Ratcliffe and Walden 2010; Ratcliffe, Strang, and Taylor 2014). Despite scholars not having an interest in classified information, the presence of security measures to safeguard classified information is believed to inhibit a willingness to share even the most basic of information regarding law enforcement intelligence practices. As a result, data extraction for research purposes relies on a rapport between researchers and intelligence practitioners. Such an approach is commonplace in other aspects of policing where information is sensitive, such as policing cybercrime (Holt and Bossler 2012) and sex workers (Simic *et al.* 2006).

The second sample group was comprised of persons who attended the 2007 and 2008 National Fusion Center Conferences (NFCC).<sup>5</sup> The NFCC is sponsored by leading law enforcement intelligence organizations and is considered to be the prominent gathering of key

personnel from each fusion center in the United States. Attendees of the NFCC include fusion center directors, operational personnel, and intelligence analysts. This decision to survey participants at these conferences rather than sending surveys directly to fusion centers was made since the NFCC provides a concentration of key fusion center personnel – such as administrators, managers, and analysts – who are more likely and appropriate to complete a survey regarding intelligence practices as opposed to sending the survey to the center in general fashion.

This research utilized web-based surveys. Within the law enforcement sample, e-mail invitations were sent to 2,025 people and 414 replies were received (20.4% response rate). A portion of these replies were not included in the analysis that follows because a respondent either left all survey cells blank or responded with not applicable. A total of 345 responses are included in the findings. With respect to the fusion center sample, 772 email invitations were sent and 96 completed surveys were returned (12.4% response rate). The sampling frames were adjusted as respondents replied to the surveys or asked to be removed from the list.

The response rates for the surveys were less than expected. Such response rates are not surprising given online-based surveys yield lower response rates than do traditional mail or in-person surveys (Shih and Fan 2009), that cross-sectional response rates in social sciences are declining (Brick and Williams 2013), and the exploratory nature of the research within an area of law enforcement commonly believed to be a difficult one to sample as previously noted. Follow-up phone interviews were conducted with 100 randomly selected persons from the sample to gauge reasons for low response rates. Three factors were identified: 1) Survey length; 2) Jobs responsibilities and; 3) Security concerns. More information about these follow-up interviews can be provided by the author upon request. Due to an inability to detect the nature of the

response bias, and since there is no national data related to intelligence for comparison, the results presented should be accepted with caution.

Though these response rates are lower than one would hope, it is believed the samples are valid; especially when exploring a widely under-researched aspect of law enforcement inter-organizational collaboration. The law enforcement sample includes agencies from small, medium, and large municipalities, county sheriffs, and state police. Furthermore, 41 states (including the District of Columbia) with geographic distribution across the five regions of the U.S. are represented in the sample. The fusion center sample is even more generalizable as each operational fusion center in the U.S. at the time of the survey is represented. These fusion centers represent at least one major center from each state and multiple regional centers. Summaries of respondents from both samples are provided below.

Table 1 displays descriptive information for the state and local law enforcement agencies represented in the current study. Personnel data was captured from the Uniform Crime Report Police Employee Data from the same year the survey was administered. The median agency size is 276 total sworn and non-sworn personnel while the majority of agencies were located in the Midwest region of the United States, followed closely by the Southeast and Northwest. Respondents are mostly investigators and administrators who have been employed by their agency for more than 15 years.

[ Table 1 approximately here ]

Table 2 displays descriptive information of the fusion centers represented in the current study. The majority (52%) of the fusion centers in the sample consider their center to focus on

“all-crimes, all-threats, all-hazards” – implying a diverse set of intelligence-related operations which go beyond the scope of terrorism. Most of the fusion centers became operational within six years of the study being conducted (66%). Administrators and supervisors were the two predominant positions identified by respondents – as expected given upper-level management were typically selected to represent the fusion center at the conference. Lastly, most respondents (41%) indicated they had been assigned to their fusion center for one to three years at the time of being surveyed. This is not outside the norm given the nature of turn-over within fusion centers as agencies rotate assigned personnel. In the case of newly assigned personnel, having only been assigned to the fusion center for one to three years may not be indicative of a lack of knowledge since personnel assigned to the fusion center are typically chosen by the individual’s experience in intelligence operations.

[ Table 2 approximately here ]

### **Findings**

The present research utilizes a range of descriptive statistics to illustrate the extent to which inter-organizational relationships and collaboration exist across different types of law enforcement agencies and public and private organizations. Response categories represented by percentages are included in the first note below each table. Where applicable, comparisons are drawn from the fusion center respondents to the law enforcement respondents. There is an absence of consensus among scholars regarding the conceptualization of intelligence practices beyond the generally agreed upon notion that such practices should include inter-organizational relationships, the sharing and analysis of information, and a rather ambiguous awareness of

threats. Given this lack of clear conceptual guidance as well as little empirical evidence within the literature, no inferential modeling was constructed for the current study. Findings from both the law enforcement sample and the fusion center sample are discussed in parallel rather than separating the findings across samples. This organizational approach is believed to best illustrate the issues being presented.

### ***Relationships among Law Enforcement Agencies and other Organizations***

The relationships law enforcement organizations have among themselves and other community organizations is critical to the success of information sharing. If relationships are poor, or non-existent, active engagement among those organizations that have information and those who need it is unlikely to occur. Tables 3 and 4 are provided to illustrate the extent of relationships law enforcement and fusion centers have with other organizations across multiple sectors. From a knowledge development perspective, with so little known with regard to these relationships, the findings presented here are comprehensive. As there is a multitude of information provided, the most important findings and trends across these relationship contexts are discussed. An item-by-item discussion would not enhance the intent of this research.

Table 3 illustrates the proximity of working relationships between multiple organizations. To be clear, this is a measure of professional rapport proximity, not geographic proximity. For both the fusion center and law enforcement samples, the closest relationships existed among federal, state, and local law enforcement organizations. Both samples also indicated a lack of relationships with tribal law enforcement. Not surprisingly, fusion centers indicated having closer relationships with more organizations as compared to the law enforcement sample. The largest differences in these relationships, in terms of percentages, were with other state fusion

centers (80.2% fusion center, 38.6% law enforcement), the Department of Homeland Security (82.3% fusion center, 55.7% law enforcement), critical infrastructure (75.0% fusion center, 42.6% law enforcement), and the National Guard (72.9% fusion center, 44.6% law enforcement). These findings are consistent with how fusion centers are defined and structured as they should have closer relationships with these federal and other state entities than traditional law enforcement agencies.

Interestingly, the law enforcement sample indicated having closer relationships with hospitals. Though it cannot be said for certain, this is likely a result of cooperation in the event of violent crimes and victim services (such as investigations of sexual assault or shootings), not necessarily terrorism or threat related. The proximity of these relationships across position type within the law enforcement sample was closest among administrators and investigators. This is likely a result of administrators forging these relationships for operational and political reasons as well as investigators cooperating with these organizations for purposes of gathering evidence and information to clear crimes. Worth noting is that none of these relationship differences were statistically significant; lending hope that law enforcement agencies have relationships close enough to meet their operational needs.

[ Table 3 approximately here ]

Table 4 presents the results on respondents' perception of their organization's satisfaction with other organizations. These results are insightful, especially when contrasted with the previously discussed findings. Generally, only a modest number of law enforcement and fusion center respondents were very satisfied with their relationship with the organizations noted and



there was not much variation when comparing the two samples. For example, approximately 20 percent of law enforcement and fusion center respondents were very satisfied with their relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, other federal law enforcement agencies, and emergency management personnel. A somewhat higher percentage of both sample respondents were very satisfied with their relationship with state and local law enforcement agencies. Approximately 28 percent of law enforcement respondents and 34 percent of the fusion center respondents were very satisfied with their relationship with state law enforcement agencies, and over 38 percent of the law enforcement and fusion center respondents indicated they were very satisfied with their relationship with local law enforcement agencies.

Consistent (and thus not surprising) with the finding of relationship proximity, both sample respondents were not very satisfied with their relationship with tribal law enforcement, public health, and private sector agencies. These low responses are possibly linked to a lack of interaction with these agencies rather than specific concerns about these relationships. There was some variation in satisfaction with relationships when comparing across positions in the law enforcement sample. For example, supervisors, investigators, and analysts were less satisfied with their relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation compared to administrators in the sample. Supervisors and investigators were less satisfied with their relationship with other federal law enforcement compared to administrators and analysts. Supervisors, investigators, and analysts were also less likely to be satisfied with their relationship with local law enforcement, public health agencies, and emergency management agencies.

[ Table 4 approximately here ]

### ***Inter-Organizational Information Sharing***

Relationships are built to facilitate mutual benefit. In the context of the current discussion, relationships are needed to share information from disparate sources to prevent or mitigate threats and crimes. This aspect of relationships can be captured by exploring the extent to which agencies provide intelligence to, and receive intelligence from, outside agencies. Table 5 displays the extent to which organizations provide and receive intelligence from external organizations either very frequently or frequently. Similar to the findings of relationship proximity, both the fusion center and law enforcement samples indicated they most frequently provided intelligence to, and received intelligence from, state and local law enforcement agencies. Both samples also indicated providing intelligence least to tribal law enforcement and receiving information least from critical infrastructure and the National Drug Intelligence Center. Drawing inferences with respect to providing intelligence, fusion centers provided intelligence to state and tribal law enforcement as well as state government officials and the department of corrections more frequently than the law enforcement sample. With respect to receiving intelligence, fusion centers received intelligence from other state fusion centers, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and the Coast Guard significantly more than law enforcement. These findings are promising as they continue to be consistent with the conceptual design of fusion centers.

[ Table 5 approximately here ]

Table 6 presents the perceived usefulness of sources of information. Small differences existed across the fusion center and law enforcement samples with regard to perceived

usefulness of information for terrorism-related activity. The law enforcement sample indicated information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (75.7%) and its Joint Terrorism Task Force (74.8%), the Department of Homeland Security (72.8%), and other federal agencies (71.3%) as the most useful sources of information. The law enforcement sample also indicated the Attorney General's Anti-Terrorism Task Force (35.1%), Department of Defense (34.5%), and private sector (35.7%) as the least useful sources of information.

Conversely, the fusion center sample indicated the Department of Homeland Security (83.3%), other federal law enforcement agencies (82.3%), other state fusion centers (84.4%), scholarly publications (82.3%), and professional publications (82.3%) as the most useful sources of terrorism-related information. Fusion center respondents indicated state offices of homeland security and local law enforcement agencies to be the least useful sources of information. This is not surprising as the vast majority of local law enforcement agencies have little, if any, terrorism information to provide fusion centers. The role local law enforcement maintain in counter-terrorism is largely the collection of raw information that is then pushed along to fusion centers and integrated into the information sharing environment – they are not originating sources of terrorism-specific information. Fusion centers indicated that information received from the Joint Terrorism Task Force, other state fusion centers, and state law enforcement agencies were significantly more useful as compared to the law enforcement sample.

[ Table 6 approximately here ]

## *Preparedness*

Preparedness for purposes of prevention, mitigation, and response to terrorism and crime is at the heart of law enforcement information sharing relationships. Table 7 illustrates the extent to which agencies perceive their preparedness. The findings are informative. The first two items focused on understanding the threats existing in their region as well as their agency's preparation in responding to these threats. A majority (63.5%) of the law enforcement respondents thought their agencies were either very aware or aware of the threats facing their region with little variation when comparing the responses by position within the agency. In contrast, a significantly higher percentage of the fusion center respondents (over 94%) indicated they were very aware or aware of such threats facing their region. This finding is intuitive given the role of fusion centers within the greater law enforcement intelligence landscape as they are structured to serve as a lynchpin for information sharing and analysis. Fusion centers are tasked with the responsibility of identifying regional threats and facilitating awareness of potential threats to their law enforcement peers; thus this is a welcomed finding.

Similarly, nearly 43 percent of the law enforcement respondents stated their agency was very prepared or prepared for threats in their region, but a significantly higher percentage (over 67%) of the fusion center respondents indicated they were very prepared or prepared for homeland security threats. In addition, when comparing the law enforcement responses by position in the organization, the responding analysts were much more likely to say that the organization was very prepared or prepared (66% of analysts compared to the second most frequent which was 46% of administrators). Thus, although the fusion center respondents and analysts thought that their agencies were prepared for the threats in their region; other law enforcement personnel did not feel as strongly about the extent of their agency's preparedness.

Results in table 7 also illustrate widespread agreement that the law enforcement community is far from developing a comprehensive intelligence capacity. Less than 10 percent of the law enforcement respondents perceived their agency was far along in developing and maintaining a law enforcement intelligence capacity, 13 percent strongly agreed they had the capacity to identify the characteristics of events that represent the indicators or precursors of threats, and only 17 percent thought their agency provides actionable intelligence in a timely manner. Similarly, just 15 percent of fusion center respondents believed they were very far along in developing and maintaining an intelligence capacity, 19 percent strongly agreed they had the capacity to identify the characteristics of events that represent indicators and/or precursors of threats, and nearly 18 percent strongly agreed the fusion center provides intelligence in a timely manner.

The findings from the fusion center sample are more telling as these organizations are specifically tasked with these objectives and it appears personnel working within these centers feel they are not meeting desired ends. Not surprising, very few respondents from either sample believed they had a sufficient number of staff to achieve their organization's intelligence mission. Lastly, less than 17 percent of law enforcement respondents reported fusion center products provided content to aid in the prevention of crime. Though it cannot be said for certain due to the lack of baseline comparison data across the same metrics, these responses suggest increased awareness and preparedness since 9/11, but considerable work remains in building law enforcement intelligence capabilities.

[ Table 7 approximately here ]

## **Conclusions**

State and local law enforcement and fusion centers appear to be making positive progress towards forming relationships with external organizations for purposes of sharing information; although significant room remains for improvement. Trends identified in the descriptive data illustrate that the state and local law enforcement sample indicated strongest relationships among peer law enforcement agencies. This is not surprising, nor alarming. For purposes of crime and threat prevention, law enforcement is best served having strongest relationships with other law enforcement entities. However, the process of achieving their desired mission – to prevent and mitigate crimes and threats – can only be enhanced through progress in building relationships with organizations not traditionally viewed as having a policing function; such as private sector business and public health. For most agencies, the potential to develop such relationships is through an intelligence liaison officer program in which dedicated officers serve as a point of contact for two-way information flow.

Trends among fusion center respondents were consistent with the concept of fusion centers – a welcomed finding. Overall, fusion centers had closer and more diverse relationships with external organizations as compared to state and local law enforcement. These centers are charged with the responsibility of receiving, analyzing, and disseminating intelligence across sectors and jurisdictions. The successes illustrated by the data have likely been improved upon across the network of fusion centers since the data were collected. A recently published report from the Committee on Homeland Security of the U.S. House of Representatives (2013) acknowledged dramatic improvements in the sharing of intelligence directly resulting from fusion center activities highlighted in these findings.

As mentioned, there has been little empirical exploration of these relationships and to best provide context for the findings presented here they are discussed in comparison to previous works. Though no study has yet to examine law enforcement information sharing relationships with non-law enforcement organizations, the findings presented here are largely consistent with information currently known about local law enforcement perceptions of fusion centers. In their study of local South Carolina law enforcement and the South Carolina Intelligence and Information Center, Cooney *et al.* (2011) found more than 80 percent of local law enforcement perceived the fusion center to be useful; compared to approximately 66 percent in the current study. The South Carolina study also found that 86 percent of local law enforcement sampled did not submit information to the center whereas 30 percent of local law enforcement reported sending information to fusion centers in the current study.

In a survey of New Jersey State Police troopers, Ratcliffe and Walden (2010) found approximately half of the state law enforcement sampled perceived information received from other state and local law enforcement more useful than information received from the fusion center. This finding is also true in the current study, though local law enforcement perceived information from state agencies (69.9%) to be slightly more useful as compared to information from the fusion center (66.7%). This less dramatic difference found in the present study is likely an artifact of the survey population which was taken from individuals specifically working intelligence operations versus general law enforcement responsibilities. The findings presented here are distinguishable from those discussed as they are drawn from a national sample of multiple agencies and are not reflective of information sharing within a single state.

Future research in this area would benefit from more information surrounding the intricacies of these relationships. For example, the majority of fusion center and law

enforcement respondents indicated a close relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation as well as the perception that their information was useful. However, very few respondents indicated they were satisfied with their relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Improved measures, such as quantity and quality of terrorism training attended, specific types of personnel within the agency, and more detailed information as to why agencies were satisfied or not, close or not, and engaged in information sharing or not with other organizations, would help contextualize the findings presented.

Moreover, geographic proximity would also be insightful. Despite leaps in telecommunications and internet-based communications, the ability to meet face-to-face on a consistent basis for purposes of sharing information could perhaps enhance a number of relationships metrics such as satisfaction and perceived usefulness. Geographic proximity is also relevant for developing professional rapport and trust among law enforcement and non-law enforcement entities for sharing information. For example, research on strengthening relationships between police and police researchers has shown that police practitioners preferred working with researchers located in or near their community and that such proximity facilitated higher-level interaction between the two groups (Alpert, Rojek and Hansen 2009). Data utilized for the present study would allow for exploration within geographic region; however such an exploration would provide little insight to inform actionable improvement of relationships.

Improved metrics could also inform the sustainability of such relationships. It seems reasonable to assume that agencies or organizations that perceive the information received from other organizations to be useful, or relationships that are satisfactory, would be indicative of efforts worth sustaining. Furthermore, consistent across all the findings was a lack of participation with tribal law enforcement entities. Though their law enforcement footprint is



relatively small, their land sizes are significant and the location of many of these tribal areas is of interest to public safety in the southwest U.S. where issues related to border crossing are most frequent. In other areas of the U.S., the tribal role in the gambling industry (tribal casinos) is likely to have implications for terrorism planning and possible money laundering. Scholars and professionals alike should explore ways to bring tribal partners to the table in a more effective manner. Again, these relationships are likely poor as a result of geographic proximity. Despite some measurement shortcoming with regard to specificity, the findings presented are insightful and present an empirical foundation for future research to be developed.

### Notes

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2. For a comprehensive discussion of the differences of these types of intelligence see: Carter, David L. 2012. Law Enforcement Intelligence and National Security Intelligence: Exploring the Differences. *International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts Journal*, 21(1): 1-14.
3. Grant award number 2008-IJ-CX-0007.
4. This training program was primarily attended by intelligence personnel from state and local law enforcement agencies. Personnel attending the training were typically senior-level

intelligence personnel as well as intelligence analysts. The trainings were held in cities across the United States with no geographic bias as the intent of the program was to develop and enhance an intelligence capability among state and local agencies nationwide. This training lasted two-and-a-half days and was delivered free of charge to participants. The Department of Homeland Security covered all training costs.

5. Attendees of the National Fusion Center Conferences were primarily administrators and senior personnel (i.e. Director, Deputy Director, Senior Analyst). These meetings were purposely held outside of the Washington, DC area to further facilitate an emphasis on the state and local components of fusion centers. The 2007 conference was held in Destin, Florida and San Francisco, California held the conference in 2008. Attendees were responsible for their own costs to attend; however these costs were allowable expenses under state homeland security funds and enabled representation of multiple persons from each fusion center.

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## Tables

Table 1. Law Enforcement Sample Descriptives ( $n = 345$ )

<i>Agency Size</i>	Median (Mean)
	276 (1341)
	Valid Percent ( $n$ )
<i>Respondent's Position</i>	
Administrator	29% (100)
Supervisor	23% (81)
Investigator	32% (110)
Analyst	16% (54)
<i>Respondent Years at Agency</i>	
Less than 1 Year	0.3% (1)
1-3 Years	06% (20)
4-9 Years	18% (64)
10-15 Years	21% (73)
More than 15 Years	55% (187)
<i>Agency Region</i>	
Northeast	22% (77)
Southeast	23% (80)
Midwest	27% (91)
Southwest	11% (37)
West	17% (60)



Table 2. Fusion Center Sample Descriptives ( $n = 96$ )

	Valid Percent( $n$ )
<i>Respondent's Position</i>	
Administrator	51% (49)
Supervisor	20% (19)
Investigator	8% (7)
Analyst	10% (10)
Not Specified	11% (11)
<i>Respondent Years at Fusion Center</i>	
Less than 1 Year	10% (10)
1-3 Years	41% (39)
4-9 Years	27% (26)
10-15 Years	3% (3)
More than 15 Years	2% (2)
Not Specified	17% (16)
<i>Focus of Fusion Center</i>	
Terrorism Only	5% (5)
"All-Crimes"	29% (28)
"All-Crimes, All-threats, All-Hazards"	52% (50)
Not Specified	14% (13)
<i>Age of Fusion Center</i>	
1-3 Years	39% (36)
4-6 Years	27% (26)
7 or More Years	17% (16)
Not Specified	17% (16)

Table 3. Proximity of Working Relationships<sup>1</sup>

Organization	Fusion Center <sup>2</sup>	Law Enforcement <sup>3</sup>	Administrator <sup>4</sup>	Supervisor <sup>4</sup>	Investigator <sup>4</sup>	Analyst <sup>4</sup>
Federal Bureau Investigation	76.0% (73)	72.5% (250)	25.1% (83)	16.0% (53)	22.4% (74)	10.3% (34)
Federal Law Enforcement	80.2% (77)	79.1% (273)	25.7% (85)	17.2% (57)	26.3% (87)	12.1% (40)
State Law Enforcement	84.4% (81)	86.7% (299)	26.9% (89)	20.5% (68)	28.7% (95)	12.4% (41)
Local Law Enforcement	80.2% (77)	86.4% (298)	26.0% (86)	21.8% (72)	27.5% (91)	12.7% (42)
Tribal Law Enforcement	30.2% (29)	20.6% (71)	4.5% (15)	4.8% (16)	6.9% (23)	4.8% (16)
State Fusion Center	NA	58.0% (200)	18.7% (62)	13.9% (46)	18.7% (62)	8.2% (27)
Other State Fusion Center	80.2% (77)	38.6% (100)	10.9% (36)	7.6% (25)	14.2% (47)	7.3% (24)
State Government Officials	74.0% (71)	48.7% (168)	17.5% (58)	11.2% (27)	16.0% (53)	5.7% (19)
Critical Infrastructure	75.0% (72)	42.6% (147)	14.8% (49)	11.5% (38)	12.1% (40)	5.7% (19)
Dept of Corrections	68.8% (66)	60.9% (210)	17.5% (58)	14.2% (47)	21.8% (72)	8.8% (29)
Emergency Management	78.1% (75)	69.9% (241)	23.3% (77)	17.2% (57)	21.5% (71)	9.5% (31)
Fire	62.5% (61)	64.3% (222)	21.1% (70)	15.4% (51)	21.1% (70)	7.9% (26)
Homeland Security	82.3% (79)	55.7% (192)	19.6% (65)	14.2% (47)	16.0% (53)	7.6% (25)
Internal Revenue Service	44.8% (43)	33.6% (116)	12.4% (41)	7.3% (24)	10.6% (35)	4.5% (15)
Hospitals	51.0% (49)	57.1% (197)	20.8% (69)	14.2% (47)	17.8% (59)	5.4% (18)
Private Sector	61.5% (59)	45.8% (158)	17.5% (58)	11.2% (37)	13.6% (45)	4.8% (16)
Public Health Agencies	65.6% (63)	55.4% (191)	19.3% (64)	14.5% (48)	17.2% (57)	5.4% (18)
Public Works	52.1% (50)	60.9% (210)	21.8% (72)	14.5% (48)	19.0% (63)	6.0% (20)
Transportation	65.6% (63)	52.5% (181)	19.0% (63)	13.3% (44)	14.8% (49)	6.0% (20)
National Guard	72.9% (70)	44.6% (154)	15.7% (52)	9.1% (30)	13.9% (46)	6.6% (22)

<sup>1</sup>Very Close/Somewhat Close; <sup>2</sup>n = 96; <sup>3</sup>n = 345; <sup>4</sup>Law enforcement sample  
\*.001, \*\*.05

Table 4. Satisfaction with Information Sharing Relationships<sup>1</sup>

Organization	Fusion Center <sup>2</sup>	Law Enforcement <sup>3</sup>	Administrator <sup>4</sup>	Supervisor <sup>4</sup>	Investigator <sup>4</sup>	Analyst <sup>4</sup>
Federal Bureau Investigation	19.8% (19)	20.6% (71)	28.7% (99)	18.3% (63)	15.7% (54)	16.8% (58)
Federal Law Enforcement	18.8% (18)	16.5% (57)	21.7% (75)	9.0% (31)	12.5% (43)	20.0% (69)
State Fusion Center	NA	22.3% (77)	24.1% (83)	18.8% (65)	22.0% (76)	25.8% (89)
State Law Enforcement	34.4% (33)	27.8% (96)	29.9% (103)	29.0% (100)	22.0% (76)	34.8% (120)
Local Law Enforcement	38.5% (37)	38.0% (131)	44.3% (153)	32.8% (113)	36.5% (124)	36.8% (127)
Tribal Law Enforcement	4.2% (4)	4.9% (17)	6.1% (21)	1.2% (4)	2.6% (9)	11.0% (38)
Private Sector	10.4% (10)	7.0% (24)	9.3% (32)	8.4% (29)	4.6% (16)	6.1% (21)
Public Health	15.6% (15)	9.6% (33)	18.6% (64)	4.9% (17)	6.4% (22)	6.1% (21)
Emergency Management	22.9% (22)	17.7% (61)	29.9% (103)	9.6% (33)	14.8% (51)	11.0% (38)

<sup>1</sup> Very Satisfied, <sup>2</sup>n = 96; <sup>3</sup>n = 345; <sup>4</sup>Law enforcement sample  
\*.001, \*\*.05

Table 5. Intelligence Sharing with External Organizations<sup>1</sup>

Intelligence Provided to External Organizations			Intelligence Received from External Organizations		
Organization	Fusion Center <sup>2</sup>	Law Enforcement <sup>3</sup>	Organization	Fusion Center <sup>2</sup>	Law Enforcement <sup>3</sup>
Federal Bureau Investigation	56.3% (54)	33.6% (116)	Federal Bureau Investigation	39.6% (38)	34.5% (119)
Federal Law Enforcement	49.0% (47)	38.8% (134)	Drug Enforcement Admin	28.1% (27)	28.4% (98)
State Law Enforcement	69.8%** (67)	48.4% (167)	State Law Enforcement	62.5% (60)	40.3% (139)
Local Law Enforcement	64.6% (62)	55.4% (191)	Local Law Enforcement	45.8% (44)	33.0% (114)
Tribal Law Enforcement	16.7% (16)**	10.1% (35)	Sheriff	59.4% (57)	48.1% (166)
State Fusion Center	NA	30.1% (104)	State Fusion Center	NA	40.0% (138)
Other State Fusion Center	51.0% (49)	19.7% (68)	Other State Fusion Center	60.4%** (58)	23.8% (82)
State Govt Officials	42.7%** (41)	21.2% (73)	State Attorney General	20.8%** (20)	18.3% (63)
Critical Infrastructure	45.8% (44)	22.0% (76)	Critical Infrastructure	33.3% (32)	15.7% (54)
Dept of Corrections	45.8%** (44)	30.4% (105)	Dept of Corrections	46.9% (45)	31.0% (107)
Emergency Management	49.0% (47)	30.7% (106)	Border Patrol	19.8% (19)	16.8% (58)
Fire	40.6% (39)	25.5% (88)	Fire	24.0% (23)	28.1% (97)
Homeland Security	55.2% (53)	27.2% (94)	Homeland Security	45.8% (44)	34.5% (119)
Internal Revenue Service	21.9% (21)	12.8% (44)	Immigration and Customs Enforcement	30.2%** (29)	26.4% (91)
Hospitals	16.7% (16)	18.3% (63)	US Attorney's Office	28.1% (27)	19.1% (66)
Private Sector	29.2% (28)	15.5% (53)	Private Sector	26.0% (25)	18.8% (65)
Public Health Agencies	33.3% (32)	18.0% (62)	Public Health Agencies	29.2% (28)	14.5% (50)
Public Works	18.8% (18)	21.4% (74)	National Drug Intelligence Center	20.8% (20)	10.7% (37)
Transportation	38.5% (37)	20.0% (69)	Coast Guard	24.0%** (23)	12.2% (42)
National Guard	45.8% (44)	17.1% (59)	National Guard	34.4% (33)	12.5% (43)

<sup>1</sup>Very Frequently/Frequently <sup>2</sup>n = 96; <sup>3</sup>n = 345;  
\*.001, \*\*.05

Table 6. Usefulness of Information Sources<sup>1</sup>

Organization	Fusion Center <sup>2</sup>	Law Enforcement <sup>3</sup>
Federal Bureau Investigation	75.0% (72)	75.7% (261)
FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force	75.0%** (72)	74.8% (258)
Department of Homeland Security	82.3% (79)	72.8% (251)
Other Federal Agencies	82.3% (79)	71.3% (246)
State Fusion Center	NA	66.7% (230)
Other State Fusion Center	84.4%** (81)	60.3% (208)
State Law Enforcement	72.9%** (70)	69.9% (241)
Local Law Enforcement	40.6% (39)	57.7% (199)
State Office of Homeland Security	28.1% (27)	45.8% (158)
Attorney General Anti-Terrorism Task Force	80.2% (77)	35.1% (121)
Department of Defense	50.0% (48)	34.5% (119)
Terrorism Early Warning Group	74.0% (71)	40.0% (138)
Books, Articles, Scholarly Materials	82.3% (79)	56.2% (194)
Professional Law Enforcement Publications	82.3% (79)	62.6% (216)
Open Sources	53.1% (51)	70.4% (243)
Private Sector	53.1% (51)	35.7% (123)

<sup>1</sup>Very Useful/Useful <sup>2</sup>n = 96; <sup>3</sup>n = 345;

\*.001, \*\*.05

Table 7. Perceptions of Preparedness

Question	Fusion Center <sup>5</sup>	Law Enforcement <sup>6</sup>	Administration <sup>7</sup>	Supervisor <sup>7</sup>	Investigator <sup>7</sup>	Analyst <sup>7</sup>
Aware of threats <sup>1</sup>	93.8%* (90)	63.5% (219)	6.9% (238)	63.2% (218)	57.4% (198)	70.4% (243)
Prepared for threats <sup>2</sup>	67.7%* (65)	42.6% (147)	46.1% (159)	32.5% (112)	35.7% (123)	66.1% (228)
Far along in developing intelligence capacity <sup>3</sup>	14.6%* (14)	9.3% (32)	8.4% (29)	6.7% (23)	7.0% (24)	16.5% (57)
Sufficient staff <sup>4</sup>	1.0%** (1)	2.9% (10)	1.4% (5)	1.2% (4)	4.1% (14)	2.9% (10)
Can identify threats <sup>4</sup>	18.8%* (18)	13.3% (46)	14.5% (50)	16.8% (58)	7.2% (25)	18.6% (64)
Provide timely intell <sup>4</sup>	17.7%* (17)	16.8% (58)	16.5% (57)	19.1% (66)	12.8% (44)	24.1% (83)
Fusion center products aid crime prevention <sup>4</sup>	NA	16.8% (58)	17.7% (61)	20.0% (69)	12.8% (44)	18.0% (62)

<sup>1</sup>Very aware/aware; <sup>2</sup>Very prepared/prepared; <sup>3</sup>Very far; <sup>4</sup>Strongly Agree; <sup>5</sup>n = 96; <sup>6</sup>n = 345; <sup>7</sup>Law enforcement sample  
\*.001, \*\*.05