

Palm Beach County, Florida

Smart Policing Initiative

*Increasing Police Legitimacy and Reducing
Victimization in Immigrant Communities*

Smart Policing Initiative: Site Spotlight

June 2012

Smart Policing: Snapshot

The Palm Beach County, Florida Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) addressed robberies in the Guatemalan community in Lake Worth using strategies that reflect core principles of Community Policing: data-driven analysis of the problem, community engagement, problem solving, and partnerships. Analysis showed that many of the robbery victims are day laborers who make easy targets for criminals because they tend to carry cash payments from their labor on their person; they solicit employment from potential, but unknown employers; and they loiter in public places at night, often engaging in public consumption of alcohol. This problem is complicated by a trust gap between law enforcement and the Guatemalan community, due to language and cultural barriers, as well as a variety of complications linked to illegal immigration, migrant workers, and enforcement of immigration laws. The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) SPI included targeted efforts to increase police legitimacy, to improve residents' awareness of their victimization risk, and to empower residents to embrace crime prevention in their community.

The centerpiece of the Palm Beach County SPI involved the hiring of a Community Liaison and the re-assignment of a dedicated robbery detective to the target area. The Community Liaison served as a community advocate and as an intermediary between law enforcement and the immigrant community. For this project, the Community Liaison was a Guatemalan-born naturalized citizen who speaks English, Spanish, and the Mayan language, Kanjobal. His central goal was to build a bridge between PBSO and the migrant community by engaging residents and law enforcement in positive outreach events. He also collaborated extensively with the line and leadership levels of the PBSO, the Guatemalan Consulate, community-based organizations, banks, business leaders, and the media. In addition, a dedicated robbery detective investigated all robberies in the target community, worked closely with the Community Liaison, conducted proactive patrols throughout the target area, and monitored known offenders and ex-offenders.

Surveys of residents in the target area indicate that immigrants' attitudes toward the police improved notably during the SPI, including higher levels of satisfaction, and greater levels of comfort speaking to police and reporting crimes (i.e., greater trust). Crime data indicate a short-term spike in robberies during the initial phase of the project, possibly resulting from increased reporting due to successful engagement of the residents, followed by a longer-term decline in robberies. **At the same time, arrests for robberies have increased.** The Palm Beach County SPI highlights a number of lessons that may be useful for other law enforcement agencies seeking to engage immigrant communities, such as the importance of hiring a Community Liaison; coordinating with state and federal immigration authorities; anticipating brief spikes in crime as a result of greater crime reporting; and understanding the "big picture" with regard to community engagement, police legitimacy, and increased cooperation and compliance with the law.

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA SMART POLICING INITIATIVE: INCREASING POLICE LEGITIMACY AND REDUCING VICTIMIZATION IN IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

Recent increases in robbery in the city of Lake Worth, Florida have been concentrated in neighborhoods where many of the residents are migrant workers of Guatemalan (and Mayan) descent. The Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) and its research partner at Lynn University sought to address this robbery problem, as well as general challenges surrounding policing in immigrant communities, through their Smart Policing Initiative (SPI). The PBSO SPI included targeted efforts to increase police legitimacy, to improve residents' awareness of their victimization risk, and to empower residents to embrace crime prevention in their community. Of note, the strategies that defined the PBSO SPI reflect core principles of the Community Policing philosophy, including data-driven analysis of the problem, community engagement, problem solving, and partnerships.

It is important to recognize that local efforts by police to engage immigrants in an open dialogue on crime and victimization occur within the context of cultural and language barriers, and against the larger backdrop of state and national politics on immigration policy. For example, state laws that target illegal immigration, such as SB1070 in Arizona and proposed Senate Bill 2040 in Florida, often impede local law enforcement efforts to engage

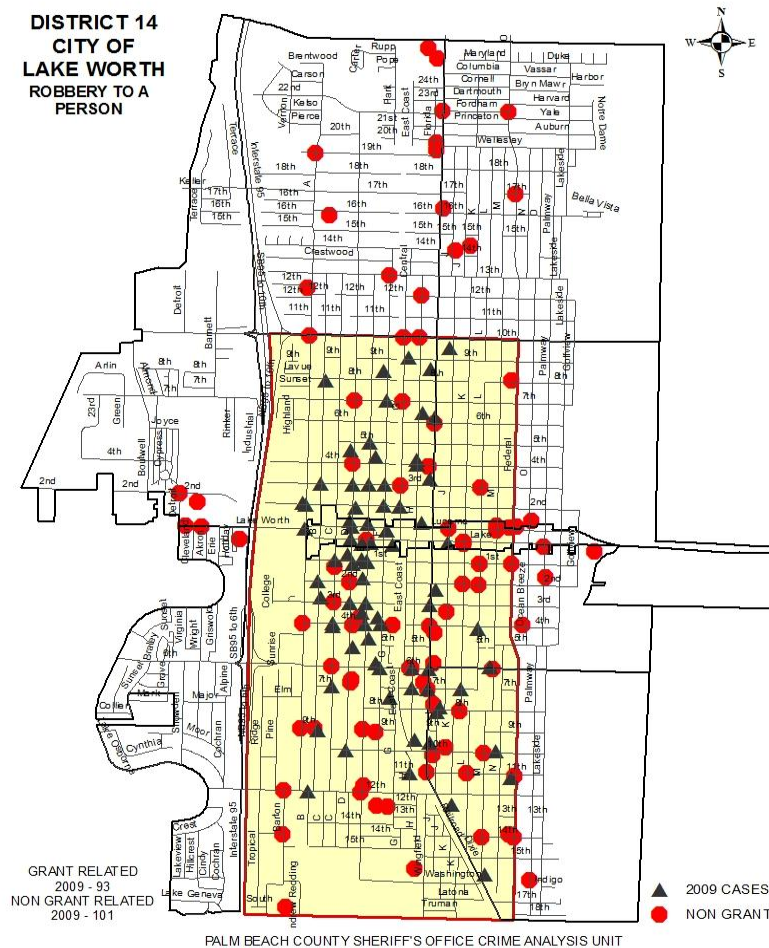
immigrant communities in problem-solving and crime prevention, and negatively affect immigrants' views of the police. Once police legitimacy is compromised, the ability of law enforcement to prevent and respond to crime in these neighborhoods is weakened, leading to less effective policing and greater risk of victimization for residents. The PBSO SPI successfully dealt with many of these challenging issues, and their experiences provide important lessons for law enforcement in the United States and abroad.

I. THE PROBLEM

The city of Lake Worth is located in central Palm Beach County and has a population of approximately 35,000 residents.¹ U.S. Census data from 2010 indicate that 40 percent of the city's residents are Hispanic or Latino. Though Census data does not specifically identify the Guatemalan population, nearly three-quarters of Latino residents indicated that they were not Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban. The PBSO notes that the majority of these residents are of Guatemalan descent, and they estimate that there are an additional 10,000 undocumented immigrants in the Lake Worth area.

¹ In October 2008, the Lake Worth Police Department merged with PBSO, and, since that time, the PBSO has provided all police service to the city.

Figure 1 Robberies in Lake Worth, 2009



Notably, this area of Palm Beach County has experienced a steady increase in robberies since 2002. Figure 1 shows, for example, that in 2009, a significant portion of the area’s robberies were concentrated in Lake Worth (the SPI target area) and involved Hispanic victims (represented by triangles).²

(Note that the SPI target area is composed of two police districts. District 14 encompasses the city of Lake Worth [shaded area in Figure 1], and District 1 is the area surrounding Lake Worth). Many of the victims in these robberies are day laborers, who make easy targets for criminals because they tend to carry cash payments from their labor on their person; they solicit employment from potential, but unknown employers; and they loiter in public places at night, often engaging in public consumption of alcohol. In fact, intelligence from the Palm Beach County Violent Crime Task Force (VCTF) shows that many of the suspects in

² Grant-related robberies met both of these criteria: in Lake Worth (District 14); involve Hispanic victims. Hispanic victims are displayed because the PBSO does not officially distinguish Guatemalan victims in their crime reporting. Non grant-related robberies (represented by dots) are those that occurred outside of District 14 or that occurred in District 14 but did not involve Hispanic victims.

these robberies are gang members from outside of Lake Worth who are drawn specifically to this area because of the vulnerability of this immigrant population.

This immigrant population is challenging for law enforcement for numerous reasons. First, the population is both migrant and mobile. Most do not have a permanent residence, and many move in and out of Palm Beach County based on available employment that changes often. This mobility makes it very difficult for police to gather information on crime and to follow up with victims. Second, communication with the residents in this community is complicated by complex culture and language barriers, as well as by high rates of illiteracy. The Guatemalan neighborhoods are rich with customs and values that are unique to their culture, and though many residents do speak and understand Spanish, it is not their native language. For example, there are 23 different dialects in the Mayan population, and all are spoken in the Lake Worth target area. Third, many of the residents in this community have had negative interactions with police in their native country, and these past experiences have colored their views of local police in Palm Beach County. Finally, a significant portion of this population is in the country illegally, and fear of deportation leads many individuals to avoid contact with police, even if they have been the victims of crime. These fears are then exacerbated by state-level immigration legislation. As a result, police efforts to engage the immigrant community, to reduce their risk of victimization, and to enhance their views of police legitimacy are seriously challenged.

II. THE RESPONSE

The PBSO SPI sought to achieve three overall goals:

1. To cultivate trust and collaboration with the immigrant community, and to empower residents to report crimes and take proactive stances against victimization;
2. To educate residents on crime prevention and risky behaviors, such as carrying cash, loitering, consuming alcohol in public, and soliciting employment in public, all of which increase their risk of victimization; and
3. To proactively investigate robberies and track robbery suspects in the target area.

Each of these goals was addressed through a community-oriented, problem-solving process that was data-driven and tailored to the specific needs of the immigrant community. The centerpiece of the PBSO SPI involved the hiring of a Community Liaison and the re-assignment of a dedicated robbery detective to the target area. Each of these positions is described below.

The Community Liaison

The PBSO hired a Community Liaison in April 2010, who serves as a community advocate and as an intermediary between law enforcement and the immigrant community. The Community Liaison is a Guatemalan-born naturalized citizen who speaks English, Spanish, and the Mayan language, Kanjobal. His central goal has been to build a bridge between the PBSO and the migrant community by engaging residents and law enforcement in positive outreach events.³

³ For local news stories on the PBSO SPI and the Community Liaison, see <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/palm-beach/fl-smart-policing-pbso-20110320,0,4148400.story> and

These community-building events include the following:

- *A kick-off picnic in July 2010 that formally introduced the liaison to the community and initiated a dialogue over victimization, crime prevention, and availability of social services.* More than 250 residents attended the picnic, which also included representatives from community-based organizations, the Palm Beach County Health Department, banks, and the media.
- *Two Guatemalan Consulate events in August 2010 and May 2011, each of which drew more than 2,000 Guatemalan citizens.* The events focused on providing information regarding at-risk behaviors, crime prevention, opening bank accounts, and securing formal documentation. At the 2010 event, more than 1,600 individuals were able to obtain identification cards and passports (which facilitate opening a bank account).
- *A Unity Soccer Cup Tournament in March 2011, planned and facilitated by the Community Liaison.* Eight local teams competed against one another—including a team fielded by the PBSO, and more than 800 people attended the event.⁴ A second soccer tournament was held in September 2011.
- *Quarterly meetings between the liaison and clergy and business leaders, as well as regular spots on two local Spanish radio stations (one bi-weekly and one bi-*

monthly). The Community Liaison answers questions from callers and discusses topics such as how to report anonymous tips through Crime Stoppers, available resources in the community, immigration issues, and upcoming outreach events.

- *A Town Hall Forum held in July 2011 at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, which was attended by more than 200 individuals.* The Forum served a dual purpose for residents to voice their concerns to the PBSO and for the PBSO to educate residents about their efforts with the community.
- *A City Benches Initiative, whereby crime information was prominently advertised on two city benches in the target area.* The information, which was advertised from June–November 2010, was in Spanish and offered tips on how to avoid becoming a victim of robbery and other violent crimes.
- *A Business Camera initiative organized by the Community Liaison.* From June 2010 through July 2011, surveillance cameras and signage were placed outside two convenience stores as a deterrent for robberies.
- *Monthly presentations to ESOL classes (English for Students of Other Languages) at the local high school that provided information on behaviors that increase risk of victimization.* The PBSO SPI team has developed a structured curriculum, as well as pre-post survey instruments to gauge participants' learning. Approximately 1,100 residents have attended these sessions.
- *Engagement with the Sheriff's office at both the line and leadership levels to raise awareness of the plight and needs of this*

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/lake-worth-liaison-builds-trust-between-city-immigrants-2231871.html>.

⁴ For a local news story on the Unity Soccer Cup tournament, see <http://youtube/mj7QpzPvUIU>.

community. This includes regular reporting to PBSO leadership and collaboration with both robbery detectives and patrol officers. For example, the liaison started an Alcohol Awareness campaign that involves a partnership with patrol officers in the target area. The liaison and a patrol officer walk through the community in the evenings when many at-risk behaviors are likely to occur, where they talk informally with residents regarding safety, crime prevention, and available resources for alcohol and substance abuse. They also raise awareness regarding the PBSO's outreach efforts.

The Dedicated Robbery Detective

In January 2010, the PBSO assigned a dedicated robbery detective to investigate all robberies in the target community. The detective, who is fluent in Spanish, works very closely with the Community Liaison to follow up with crime victims, educate them regarding the investigation process, and encourage them to cooperate with the criminal justice system. **Over the course of the study period, the detective has investigated 197 robbery cases, and conducted 120 victim interviews. The detective and the Community Liaison have also developed an operational plan for working robbery cases together that involves multiple, cooperative contacts with victims and other justice system officials.**

The detective also conducts proactive patrols throughout the target community to communicate with residents, identify at-risk behaviors, and gather intelligence on offenders. **For example, the detective has conducted 63 proactive, directed patrols in the target area. During those patrols he has issued 392**

citations, completed 441 field investigation reports, and arrested 52 suspects.

The robbery detective teamed up with the Community Liaison and the District's Community Policing Team to participate in a nightly Alcohol Awareness campaign, **as well as to conduct robbery suppression details.** He also meets weekly with the PBSO's Strategic Intelligence Unit to identify and track individuals released from jail and state prison who return to the target community. The detective makes contact with ex-offenders through "knock and talks" to make sure that they are complying with any court-ordered conditions and to refer them to any services they may need to facilitate their re-entry into the community. From 2010–2011, the robbery detective followed up with 81 ex-offenders from the target area. The overall objective of assigning a dedicated robbery detective to the target area is to increase crime reporting and victim cooperation with police, and, as a result, to improve the PBSO investigation of robberies in the target community.

III. ASSESSING IMPACT

The target area is composed of two police districts, which include the city of Lake Worth (District 14) and surrounding areas (District 1). The districts are comparable in terms of size; geography; race and ethnicity of residents; crime levels; and socio-economic indicators.⁵ Given the size of the target area, the PBSO

⁵ District 1 is 3.42 square miles and has a population of 30,674. Residents' income per capita is \$13,975. The racial/ethnic breakdown is 54 percent Hispanic, 29 percent White, and 14 percent Black. District 14 is slightly larger, at 5.87 square miles, and has a population of 34,910. Residents' income per capita is \$18,918. The racial/ethnic breakdown is 40 percent Hispanic, 38 percent White, and 20 percent Black.

labeled District 14 as the treatment area in which all SPI-related activities were focused, including all of the Community Liaison’s efforts, the community engagement events, the dedicated robbery detective’s work, and the coordinated efforts of the liaison with the detective. District 1 received none of the SPI-related strategies, and it served as the comparison area.⁶ As a result, the key outcomes that the PBSO sought to achieve can be examined in two ways: first, by examining change in the intervention area over time (District 14), and, second, by comparing the outcomes of District 14 to District 1. The key outcomes that the PBSO is seeking to achieve are improved immigrant attitudes toward the PBSO and a reduction in robberies.

Immigrant Attitudes toward the PBSO

The PBSO SPI team developed and administered surveys at each of the scheduled events.⁷ All surveys that were completed at events from April–September 2010 (n=134) were considered the “early-intervention period.” These events included a community picnic, an event at the Guatemalan Consulate, and presentations at ESOL classes. All surveys completed at events from October 2010 through December 2011 (n=246) were considered the “mid-intervention

period.”⁸ These events included the Unity Soccer cup Tournament, an event at the Guatemalan Consulate, and an event at the local Swap Shop.⁹ Table 1 (on Page 9) shows the results of several survey items in District 14 during the early and mid-intervention periods (note that a smaller mean score represents higher levels of agreement). All of the items indicate improved views toward the police in the mid-intervention period, with several reaching statistical significance. More specifically, individuals in the mid-intervention period reported higher levels of satisfaction with police, greater levels of comfort with regard to speaking to police and reporting crimes (i.e., greater levels of trust), and greater agreement with the statements that “police treat people with respect” and “police are a good resource in their community.” Of note, they also reported similar improved attitudes among other people they know. Interestingly, individuals who attended the events and completed a survey but who did not live in the intervention area (e.g., live in District 1) also showed improved views of the police over time (see Table 2 on Page 9).

⁶ Although all community engagement events were held in the target area (District 14), residents of other areas were permitted to attend. For example, the Consulate events drew Guatemalan citizens from across the State of Florida. The SPI team administered surveys as part of each of these events, and as a result, was able to determine which attendees resided in the target area.

⁷ The Community Liaison and student volunteers working under his direction delivered the surveys in Spanish. Individuals were able to complete the survey and place it in an envelope for confidentiality (no identifying information was collected). If an individual was illiterate and unable to read the survey, the Community Liaison would read the survey items and mark the appropriate responses.

⁸ The first six-month period is considered “early intervention” because, during this time, the PBSO SPI was in the process of being developed and implemented. For example, the liaison was hired and the robbery detective re-assigned in April 2010. The mid-intervention period represents the time when the SPI was fully operational.

⁹ The authors recognize that this survey methodology is not ideal. More methodologically rigorous approaches were ruled out because of the mobility of the migrant population (i.e., nearly impossible to do multiple administrations by individual) and the difficulty of engaging individuals through “cold” contacts on the street (i.e., their reluctance to speak to police, strangers, etc.).

Table 1. Survey Results in Target Area (District 14)

Survey Question	Early Intervention	Mid Intervention
How comfortable are you talking to police or sheriff’s officers?	2.43 (125)	2.14 (246)*
Would you be comfortable reporting a crime to police?	2.29 (124)	2.07 (242)
Would others be comfortable reporting a crime to police?	2.67 (122)	2.36 (241)*
How satisfied are you with the police that serve your neighborhood?	2.20 (134)	2.07 (240)
How satisfied are others with the police that serve your neighborhood?	2.40 (132)	2.22 (241)
Police treat people with respect.	1.30 (101)	1.23 (211)
Do you feel the Sheriff’s Office is a good resource in your community?	1.92 (119)	1.64 (231)*

*significant at p<.05 (t-test)

Table 2. Survey Results in Comparison Area (District 1)¹⁰

Survey Question	Early Intervention	Mid Intervention
How comfortable are you talking to police or sheriff’s officers?	2.8 (41)	1.9 (56)*
Would you be comfortable reporting a crime to police?	2.6 (41)	1.9 (55)*
Would others be comfortable reporting a crime to police?	2.9 (40)	2.4 (53)
How satisfied are you with the police that serve your neighborhood?	2.5 (41)	2.1 (56)
How satisfied are others with the police that serve your neighborhood?	2.6 (40)	2.4 (57)
Police treat people with respect.	1.3 (36)	1.2 (48)
Do you feel the Sheriff’s Office is a good resource in your community?	2.3 (38)	1.7 (53)*

*significant at p<.05 (t-test); note that the smaller n in this table affects statistical significance.

Table 3. Average Monthly Number of Robberies by Time Period and District¹¹

Time Period	District 14	District 1
Pre-SPI Intervention (1/09–3/10; 15 months)	8.1 (n=121)	2.7 (n=40)
Early SPI Intervention (4/10–9/10; 6 months)	9.2 (n=55)	1.8 (n=11)
Mid-SPI Intervention (10/10–12/11; 15 months)	7.3 (n=109)	2.6 (n=39)

¹⁰ Recall that individuals who resided outside the target area were permitted to attend the District 14 events (e.g., they were open to the public). This may indicate that the SPI positively affected the views of migrants who reside outside of District 14.

¹¹ Note that Table 3 includes only “grant-related” robberies. See earlier definition.

Frequency of Robbery

The PBSO SPI team examined the nature and prevalence of robbery in the target area. Table 3 (on Page 9) illustrates robbery trends by intervention period: pre-intervention (15 months before the SPI), the early-intervention period (six months), and the mid-intervention period (15 months). From January 2009 through March 2010, before the SPI began, the average monthly number of robberies in District 14 was 8.1 (121 robberies over 15 months). During the SPI early-intervention period (from April–September 2010), the average monthly number of robberies actually increased to 9.2, representing an increase of more than one robbery per month.¹² This increase may be a consequence of the PBSO SPI team’s outreach efforts, which may have successfully engaged the migrant community, improved their attitudes toward law enforcement (see survey results above) and led to an increase in the reporting of crime. During the SPI mid-intervention period, from October 2010 through December 2011, the average monthly number of robberies dropped to 7.3 (109 robberies over 15 months), representing a decrease of two robberies per month from the early-intervention period, and one robbery per month from the period before the SPI began.

At the same time that reported robberies have gone down, robbery arrests have increased. For example, in 2010 the dedicated robbery detective made 8 arrests in the target area, and in 2011 the number of arrests increased slightly to 10. However, in the first five months

of 2012, the dedicated robbery detective has made 16 arrests in District 14. This represents a substantial increase in robbery clearance that is likely tied to the hard work of the detective and the Liaison in terms of breaking down barriers and increasing communication and information sharing among residents and police.

Another important question to consider is whether the robbery trends observed in the target area are unique, or whether they are part of larger crime trends in the area. Table 3 shows the robbery trends in District 1, and the patterns in this comparison area are quite distinct from the patterns in the target area. For example, during the early-intervention period, when robberies increased in the target area, they actually decreased in District 1. In the mid-intervention period, when robberies decreased in the target area, robberies increased in District 1. The different patterns in the target and comparison area suggest that the decrease in robberies in Lake Worth is unique, and support the argument that the decrease was related to the PBSO SPI. The robbery reduction in Lake Worth not only represents an improvement in public safety, but it also represents a significant savings in terms of victimization costs. For example, John Roman from the Urban Institute has calculated total crime costs in dollars, by crime type, and he estimates that each robbery costs an average of \$279,085.¹³ Using this figure, the average cost

¹² Monthly averages are used because the lengths of the different time periods vary (from 6 to 15 months). The final-intervention period (2012) represents the last year of the PBSO SPI; it is currently being examined and will be added to the analysis at a later date.

¹³ The victimization costs that Roman calculated are based on economic damages in jury awards, as well as injury data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s National Incident-Based Reporting System. For more detail on these calculations, see: Roman (2011). “How do we measure the severity of crime? New estimates of the cost of criminal victimization.” *Measuring Crime and Criminality*, John MacDonald (Ed), New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers. pp. 37-70.

of robbery victimization can be estimated for each time period. In the 15-month period before the SPI began (January 2009 – March 2010), there were 121 robberies in Lake Worth (121/15 months = 8.1 per month). At \$279,085 per robbery, the crime cost during this 15-month period totals \$33.8 million. In the mid-intervention period (also 15 months, from October 2010 through December 2011), there were 109 robberies with a victimization cost of \$30.4 million. In simple terms, the reduction in robberies in the target area generated a savings in victimization costs of approximately \$3.4 million.¹⁴

IV. LESSONS LEARNED

The PBSO SPI achievements are attributable to their adherence to core principles of Community Policing, including data-driven analysis of the problem, community engagement, problem solving, and partnerships. The PBSO recognized that to effectively reduce robberies in the target community, it would first have to engage the immigrant residents in an open dialogue over crime and victimization, and then empower them to take ownership of risk reduction and prevention in their own neighborhoods. The early successes described here represent a starting point in a longer-term effort to sustain police legitimacy and positive communication with the migrant Guatemalan population in Lake Worth.

For the Police Manager

Hire a Community Liaison and Re-assign a Dedicated Robbery Detective: The role of the

Community Liaison is absolutely critical for overcoming fear and resistance among the residents of an immigrant community. The Community Liaison can be a bridge-builder who initiates a dialogue between the residents and the police. In the PBSO SPI, the liaison shared a common background with residents who lived in the target area, and he understood that they were Guatemalan, not Hispanic. This is a critical distinction that cannot be understated. His ability to connect with individuals on a personal and familiar level laid an important foundation for the efforts that would follow. The impact of his efforts can be viewed through improved attitudes toward the police and a reduction in robberies, but it can also be measured on a personal level. For example, as the SPI moved into the mid-intervention phase, the liaison noticed an increasing number of women stopping by his office for advice and help regarding family issues. This represents a significant step, given the traditional, patriarchal Guatemalan culture.

Moreover, the Community Liaison can also engage nontraditional partners in the effort, which is a crucial component of Community Policing. In the Palm Beach SPI, these nontraditional partners included the Guatemalan Consulate, banks, the clergy, and health services. In fact, thousands of Guatemalan residents were able to obtain identification cards, passports, and bank accounts as a result of these partnerships. In simple terms, the Community Liaison facilitated a connection between the migrant community and law enforcement. This connection might take some time to reach fruition, and it may require some unconventional work on the part of the police (e.g., in Palm Beach, creating a PBSO soccer team and participating in events at

¹⁴ Note that these estimates do not include other costs to the criminal justice system through arrest, prosecution, and incarceration.

the Guatemalan Consulate). But, in the long term, this connection will increase police legitimacy in the eyes of the residents and will help the department achieve its core objectives of community engagement and crime reduction.

It is also important to provide stability on the sworn side of the partnership. In Palm Beach County, the dedicated robbery detective became a recognizable face to migrant residents, and he was increasingly viewed as an active partner working with the Community Liaison. The robbery detective's proactive work in the community (e.g., patrol and "knock and talks") served to reinforce the message being delivered by the Community Liaison. Just as important, the detective was able to monitor known offenders in the area, including those on probation and those returning to the community from prison. The detective's efforts sent a clear, deterrent message, underscoring accountability and consequences for problem behavior.

Lead by Example to Ensure the Initiative's Success: Effective leadership at the highest level is paramount if any new initiative is going to succeed, especially with programs that involve a controversial subject like illegal immigration. In law enforcement, as in the public at large, it is not unreasonable to expect that negative attitudes toward immigrants will surface. To reduce the anti-immigration bias among officers, the police manager must demonstrate to the line officers that he or she is earnest in the belief that the initiative has value, and that its goals can and will be met. This can only be accomplished when the police manager is intimately involved in the initiative, lest the line

officer perceive that the manager is only giving "lip service" to support another new program.

Often, what a police manager needs to do to demonstrate commitment cannot be pre-scripted. In the case of Palm Beach County, the police manager attended roll calls to directly engage the line officers in discussions about the initiative. He attended all of the community outreach events, and he regularly patrolled with officers and detectives in the target area. In short, a police manager will have more influence with the line officers when the officers perceive that the manager has the requisite buy-in and is modeling the behavior expected from the line officers. Leading by example will allow the police manager to build trust with the officers, establish credibility for the initiative, and demonstrate the agency's commitment to achieving the goals of the initiative.

Coordinate with Federal and State Immigration Authorities: The role of local police in immigration enforcement across the country remains unclear and poses serious challenges for initiatives by police to positively engage the immigrant community.¹⁵ The controversies surrounding this issue also highlight the importance of coordination between local law enforcement and federal (and state) agencies tasked with immigration enforcement. Federal immigration enforcement in a target community, while important and necessary, can significantly undermine empowerment-building efforts by a local police department. It is important for the police manager to maintain

¹⁵ The U.S. Supreme Court announced in early February 2012 that it will hear arguments in the case involving Arizona's SB1070 on April 25, 2012. The ruling in this case, due in fall 2012, will likely clarify many of the issues surrounding immigration-enforcement responsibilities for local law enforcement.

an open dialogue with state and federal partners. The police manager can communicate the goals and objectives of local law enforcement to those partners, and can be kept apprised of upcoming immigration operations. If federal intervention is imminent, then police managers can develop a plan to ensure minimal damage to their local community-building initiatives. As an illustration, with little notice, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted an immigration sweep in Lake Worth in September 2011 (called “Operation Cross-Check”) during the week of the second Unity Soccer event. Perhaps not coincidentally, the tournament had much lower turnout and more negative survey responses among participants compared to the soccer event in the previous year.

Be Prepared for a Short-term Spike in Reported Crime: When seeking to engage immigrant communities, one of the most important measures of success involves increased crime reporting. Given that this population has traditionally avoided contact with police, successful efforts may actually produce an initial increase in reported crime, as incidents that would have previously gone unreported are now being brought to the attention of the police. The working assumption of the police manager should be that this spike *does not* reflect an actual increase in crime; rather, it reflects an increased willingness of the residents to reach out to police and ask for help. If the empowerment-building process continues to be effective, this short-term increase in reporting will be replaced by a longer-term decrease in crime, as residents alter their at-risk behaviors (carrying cash, public intoxication, etc.) and the improved relationship between the police and the

immigrant community allows for more effective criminal investigation (targeting offenders and making arrests). This is the pattern that occurred in Lake Worth during the PBSO SPI.

For the Line Officer

Do Not Take Immigrants’ Attitudes Personally:

It is easy for line officers to take offense at the responses they may sometimes receive in immigrant communities. These responses may include fear, withdrawal, refusal to cooperate, resentment, and even outright hostility. Officers should recognize that many immigrants have long and, in some cases, tragic and violent histories with police in their native countries that have colored their judgment of local law enforcement in the United States. This cultural baggage is not easily left behind, and it may represent a major challenge for outreach efforts. If a line officer is assigned to a closely knit immigrant community, he or she would be well-advised to become acquainted with the background and recent history of the residents’ native country. This information could give the officer important insights on residents’ views and attitudes, and provide some perspective on the cultural barriers that need to be overcome.

The Community Liaison is Your Bridge:

Similarly, the Community Liaison can be very helpful in providing line officers with information, experiences, and history that can enhance their understanding of the immigrant community. Line officers should view the Community Liaison as a resource from whom they can draw information to facilitate their work. Also, it is vitally important that line officers provide support and cooperation to the Community Liaison. The Community Liaison should be seen as an equal, not an outsider or subordinate. If officers do not buy in to the

liaison's role and do not support his or her outreach, the liaison's important bridge-building work will be short-circuited, and connections between police and the immigrant community will ultimately fail to take hold.

See the Big Picture: Research shows that Community Policing strategies can change citizens' attitudes toward the police and have the potential to reduce crime.¹⁶ But, research also shows that officers generally have resisted efforts to implement Community Policing. Community Policing represents a substantial philosophical shift away from the much more popular and ingrained crime-fighting culture of police. Community Policing involves recognition that police cannot solve the crime problem by themselves, and that the community has an important role to play in crime control and prevention. These are not small issues. As a result, officers need to see the big picture and to keep in mind the overall mission of the police.

If line officers want to be successful in achieving their mission, they must first engage the community and establish themselves as a legitimate authority. The legitimacy-building process begins with treating people justly and building trust. In Palm Beach County, the Community Liaison facilitated this process. Once trust begins to take shape on a community-wide scale, immigrant residents will increasingly view the police as a legitimate, valuable resource. Increased legitimacy will lead to enhanced cooperation with the police and to greater compliance with the law.¹⁷ These

outcomes go to the very core of what police are seeking to accomplish.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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¹⁶ See Weisburd, David and Eck, John E. (2004). What can police do to reduce crime, disorder, and fear? *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 593: 42-65.

¹⁷ See: Tyler, Tom R. (1990). *Why People Obey the Law*. New Haven: Yale University Press; and Tyler, Tom. R. (2003).

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