

SMART POLICING

Data. Analysis. Solutions.



BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice



Challenges in Implementation and Impact

Lessons from the Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing Smart Policing Initiatives

July 2015

Michael D. White

Smart Policing Initiative
Spotlight Report

CNA
ANALYSIS & SOLUTIONS

www.cna.org

www.smartpolicinginitiative.com

This project was supported by Grant No. 2013-DP-BX-K006 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Cover image: freeimages.com, Cincinnati Police Department, Joliet Police Department, and Lansing Police Department

Published July 2015

Copyright © 2015 CNA

Smart Policing Challenges: The Highlights

Since 2009, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) has provided more than \$14.4 million to 35 local, county, and state law enforcement agencies conducting 38 Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) projects. Though many SPI sites have documented significant crime decreases in the targeted areas with sound research methodologies, others have been less successful. The reasons why some SPI sites have struggled are varied and include implementation problems, data analysis issues, and leadership turnover. Other sites have implemented evidence-based strategies and evaluated those strategies with rigorous research methodologies; but in the end, crime reductions were not realized. We consider such initiatives successful because they identify strategies, practices, and lessons that other jurisdictions can learn from, and they are evidence-based because of the strong research designs they employed.

This SPI spotlight reviews the experiences of three sites—Cincinnati (OH), Joliet (IL), and Lansing (MI)—that fall into this last category. All three sites were led by police officials and criminal justice scholars who were well-versed in evidence-based practices and researcher/practitioner partnerships. Each site engaged in intensive data analysis to examine the underlying conditions and causes of the targeted crime problem (robbery in Cincinnati, drug dealing in Lansing, and gun violence in Joliet). Each site implemented a comprehensive, collaborative data-driven strategy to address their respective crime problems, from interventions based on the problem analysis triangle in Cincinnati and hot spots in Joliet, to focused deterrence and offender call-ins in Lansing. Each project was evaluated using rigorous quasi-experimental research designs. Despite these ingredients for success, none of the three sites experienced statistically significant crime declines that could be tied to their SPI.

This spotlight identifies a number of common challenges to implementation and impact that were experienced by the three sites, including: lapses in continuous, real-time problem analysis; insufficient program dosage; stakeholder limitations; and tension between operational decision-making and research design integrity. In Cincinnati, for example, geographic analysis of the robbery problem led the SPI team to increase the size of the original target area, which necessarily weakened the intensity of the intervention. In Joliet, probation and parole officers were active participants in the SPI, but restrictions on their authority limited the team's ability to conduct compliance checks and to initiate revocation proceedings. In Lansing, the nature of drug dealing shifted from a traditional turf-based model to mobile transactions coordinated through cell phones, which forced the SPI team to alter their interventions “on the fly.”

These experiences (and others) in Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing highlight the importance of devising a strong process evaluation that allows for detailed documentation of implementation processes and challenges, and for a thorough understanding of why a program did or did not produce the intended crime reduction benefits. The Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing SPIs also underscore the importance of thinking broadly about program impact. Impact can be measured in terms of knowledge gained, organizational change, and new partnerships—developments that are not easily quantified in terms of statistical significance but represent positive change in a law enforcement agency.

This page is intentionally blank.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT: LESSONS FROM THE CINCINNATI, JOLIET, AND LANSING SMART POLICING INITIATIVES

MICHAEL D. WHITE

INTRODUCTION

The Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) is a Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) program that seeks to identify, implement, and test effective, efficient solutions to chronic crime problems. The SPI, which officially began in 2009, emerged at a time when law enforcement agencies were struggling with budgetary cuts in the wake of the 2008 fiscal crisis; at the same time, those same agencies were under increasing pressure to maintain responsive service levels and engage in evidence-based practices. The SPI represents an effort by BJA to assist law enforcement agencies in overcoming these multiple, sometimes competing, challenges. BJA's strategy centers on encouraging police and criminal justice scholars to work together to test solutions that are developed in a process informed by crime science theories, assessed with sound evaluation methods, and galvanized by the sense of urgency with which law enforcement agencies approach their responsibilities.

Since 2009, BJA has provided more than \$14.4 million to 35 local and state law enforcement agencies conducting 38 SPI projects. Local SPI sites have targeted a wide range of crime and disorder

problems, from quality-of-life issues to homicide, and they have employed an equally diverse array of crime reduction strategies (e.g., offender-based, place-based, intelligence-led, problem-oriented, community policing). Importantly, many SPI sites have documented significant crime decreases in the targeted areas (and for the targeted offenses). These successes were recently described in a special issue of the journal, *Police Quarterly* (2013, volume 16[3]), as well as in BJA SPI Spotlight reports (for reports on projects in Boston, Los Angeles, Lowell (MA), Glendale (AZ), Philadelphia, and other sites, see:

<http://www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/tt/a/spi-site-spotlight-reports>).

However, not all sites have experienced the same levels of success. Some have encountered extensive implementation delays and start-up struggles, and others have had difficulties in collecting and analyzing data. A sizeable number of sites have experienced turnover among their SPI teams, either at the top of the law enforcement organization, at the operational level (e.g., sergeants and lieutenants), or in a few cases, with the research partner. This turnover has challenged sites to sustain their SPI projects. Moreover, several sites have

successfully implemented their strategies but they have failed to generate statistically significant crime reductions. Regardless of the level of impact achieved, SPI research partners record and document all findings from these sites. In doing so, SPI is acquiring valuable knowledge about what works and what doesn't, including the factors that ultimately contribute to success (or the lack thereof), and is thus contributing to the body of knowledge in police science.

This SPI spotlight reviews the experiences of three SPI sites—Cincinnati (OH), Joliet (IL), and Lansing (MI)—that implemented evidence-based crime reduction strategies and evaluated those strategies with sound, rigorous research designs; but in the end, the three sites could not link statistically significant crime reductions in the targeted areas to the SPI interventions. The evidence from Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing offers valuable lessons for other law enforcement agencies regarding the difficult challenges of implementing and evaluating crime reduction strategies. These lessons should initiate a dialogue among law enforcement leaders and researchers regarding how to avoid common barriers to success, and how to overcome them when they cannot be avoided.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

The Cincinnati (OH) Smart Policing Initiative

In 2010, the Cincinnati Police Department received funding from BJA's Smart Policing Initiative to address a persistent robbery problem in the city's District 3. The Cincinnati SPI initially targeted a one-mile corridor along two business thoroughfares that accounted for 28 percent of all robberies in 2009 but less than 4 percent of the geographic area of the city.¹ The SPI was grounded in a problem solving model that gathered information on all three components of the problem analysis triangle (offenders, victims, and places), analyzed that information, and developed responses based on that analysis. The SPI team conducted a comprehensive investigation of the robbery problem, including a case review of 2009–2010 robberies, social network analysis with known offenders, geographic analysis of offender and victim residences, geographic analysis of robbery offenses, interviews of offenders and victims, and place management analysis of businesses and residences in the target area.

Based on the analysis, the Cincinnati SPI team implemented a series of interventions over a period of 18 months that targeted offenders, victims, and

¹ For a description of the Cincinnati SPI, see: J.E. Eck & K. Gallagher. 2012. *Cincinnati Police Department Robbery Reduction Initiative, Year 2 Evaluation*. Cincinnati: University of Cincinnati.

places vulnerable to robbery. Much of the offender-focused response was enforcement-oriented, including increased patrols, a focus on conducting field interrogations, “knock and talks” with known robbery offenders residing in the target area, and the assignment of three detectives to investigate robberies in the target area. Notably, much of the enforcement activity was focused on smaller segments within the target area (e.g., street segments) in order to increase the potential for an impact. The SPI also included prevention and intervention strategies, such as the installation of closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras in high-risk robbery locations, the development of business crime prevention programs designed to increase active place management, and a public prevention program to increase awareness and reduce risk of victimization, particularly among the Hispanic population in the target area (whom data analysis showed to be at greater risk).

The Cincinnati research partner conducted both process and impact evaluations of the robbery reduction project, as well as crime displacement analysis. Robbery trends were compared for the target area, a comparison area, a half-mile buffer zone around the target area, District 3, and the entire city. Results from the impact evaluation indicated that robberies declined in the target area in 2011 by 15 percent, but these declines were accompanied by similar or larger crime drops in the buffer zone (35 percent decline), District 3 (27

percent decline) and the city in general (16 percent decline). Robberies in the comparison area increased slightly in 2011 (3.6 percent). However, in 2012 the target area experienced a 22 percent increase in robberies, a trend also experienced in District 3 where the target area is located. Notably, robberies in the comparison area and in the city overall declined by 29 percent and 3 percent, respectively. The research partners concluded that the “data suggests that while the target area and District 3 as a whole experienced a change in robberies similar to most of the rest of the city in 2011, the target area and District 3 did not follow city-wide trends in 2012.”² In fact, the 2012 trends went in opposite directions.

The Joliet (IL) Smart Policing Initiative

Like many other cities across the United States, the city of Joliet, Illinois, experienced decreasing crime rates from the late 1990s through the early 2000s. Despite overall reductions in crime, gun-related crime remained persistently high.³ Moreover, the clearance rate for gun offenses had dropped to under 20 percent, in large part because of residents’ unwillingness to provide information to police. As part of their Smart Policing Initiative, the Joliet Police Department

² Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p. 26.

³ For a description of the Joliet SPI, see: R.M. Lombardo & I. Sommers. 2013. *Violence Reduction in Joliet, Illinois: An Evaluation of the Strategic Tactical Deployment Program*. Chicago: Loyola University.

developed an intelligence-based, rapid response strategy called the Strategic Tactical Deployment (STD) Program. The centerpiece of the STD program involved weekly CompStat-like meetings that focused on geographic analysis of gun crime and related offenses. Based on the weekly gun crime analysis, the Joliet SPI team identified specific hot spots and STD resources were deployed to those areas. STD deployments typically occur on weekends and involve one or two additional units that patrol the identified hot spot (STD units were not required to answer routine calls for service).

The Joliet SPI team also recognized the importance of identifying high-risk offenders, especially those already under some form of community supervision. Representatives from the Will County Probation Department and the Parole Division of the Illinois Department of Corrections attended the weekly STD crime analysis meetings and exchanged information on high-risk individuals under their supervision. The final piece of the Joliet SPI involved community outreach through the creation of the Joliet Community Committee for SMART Policing. The goals of the community outreach component were to increase citizen reporting of gun violence, and to engage citizens in the crime reduction effort.

The Joliet SPI team evaluated the impact of the STD program on shots fired and robberies from January 1995 through September 2012. The evaluation compared crime trends in the STD hot

spots and similar comparison areas throughout Joliet, using sophisticated interrupted times series analysis and Poisson regression modeling. Results indicate that levels of gun violence declined significantly in the STD target areas, as the monthly number of shots fired events dropped by 27 percent in the STD target areas. However, a decline in shots fired events also occurred in the comparison locations. While the STD reductions were greater than the reductions in the comparison areas, the difference was not statistically significant.⁴ As a result, the degree to which the STD program generated crime reductions remains unclear.

The Lansing (MI) Smart Policing Initiative

The city of Lansing, Michigan, continued to struggle with violent crime, gang-related drug dealing, and neighborhood decay throughout the early 2000s. In 2010, city leaders began a program to address crime and disorder called *Police Enforcement and Community Engagement* (PEACE). “The PEACE initiative included multiple funding streams, data-driven planning and decision-making, and a combination of enforcement, intervention, prevention and community development strategies.”⁵ The PEACE program, which

⁴ Lombardo & Sommers, 2013.

⁵ E.F. McGarrell, C. Melde, J. Pizarro, & L. Rivers. 2012. *Lansing Neighborhood Stabilization and Youth Violence Initiative: Smart Policing Initiative*. East Lansing: Michigan State University (p. 1). Note that the PEACE program was supported through SPI funds, as well as

expanded as part of the Smart Policing Initiative, was grounded in a partnership between the Lansing Police Department and the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University (MSU). The primary components of the program included ongoing problem analysis and support (provided by the research partners at MSU), proactive targeted enforcement (undercover drug enforcement and warrant service) at identified high-crime hot spots led by LPD's Special Operations Unit, a focused deterrence Drug Market Intervention (DMI), and community engagement.

Proactive enforcement activities were focused in two target areas, starting in June 2010. The officers used combinations of directed police patrols in marked cars, undercover vehicles, and bicycle and foot patrols.⁶ Similar enforcement initiatives were launched during the June–July period in 2011 and 2012. As part of the DMI, the Lansing SPI team held a series of four offender call-ins during this same time period, in which the traditional focused deterrence message was delivered to identified “A listers” and “B listers” from the target areas.⁷ The SPI team also

collaborated with the Boys and Girls Club of Lansing to implement prevention and intervention efforts for at-risk youth.⁸

The Lansing SPI team identified comparison areas, and analyzed crime trends over five consecutive time periods, each six months in length. The Lansing team employed both descriptive statistics and spatial ARCGIS techniques to examine crime trends in the target and comparison areas, as well as citywide. The Lansing SPI team found:

Measurement and analysis of crime trends resulted in ambiguous findings. Although crime declined somewhat in targeted areas, it was consistent with declines in the comparison areas and citywide. This may indicate some other factor was generating the crime reduction.⁹

additional funding through U.S. Department of Justice Juvenile Accountability and Project Safe Neighborhoods grants.

⁶ During the 2010 heightened enforcement period, 85 arrests were made, 38 criminal investigations were launched, 14 narcotics investigations were implemented, and three handguns were recovered.

⁷ “A listers” refer to offenders who have been targeted for a primarily law enforcement response in a focused deterrence strategy. “A listers” are the most serious, criminally active offenders who received stiff sentences and serve as examples for the “B listers.” “B listers” refer to individuals who are not as serious in terms of their

criminal involvement but who are on a pathway to becoming violent. “B listers” are targeted for intervention through attendance at a call-in where the focused deterrence is delivered in conjunction with an offer for social service assistance. Michigan State University. 2010. *Examples of Intelligence-driven Strategies for Reducing Gun, Gang, and Drug Market Related Violence*. East Lansing: Michigan State University.

⁸ For more details on the Lansing intervention, see: E.F. McGarrell, C. Melde, J. Pizarro, & L. Rivers. 2012. *Lansing Neighborhood Stabilization and Youth Violence Initiative: Smart Policing Initiative*. East Lansing: Michigan State University.

⁹ McGarrell et al., 2012, p.1.

II. CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

The Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing SPIs share a number of common elements. First, each of the SPI teams was composed of veteran law enforcement, academic, and community partners who were well-versed in collaborative crime reduction efforts. Second, the interventions designed by the respective teams were grounded in evidence-based practices and reflected the spirit of the SPI: from place-based, hot spot strategies and focused deterrence to collaborative partnerships with probation, parole, and other key stakeholders, and the incorporation of intelligence-led policing. Third, the research partners designed rigorous evaluation plans to capture implementation and impact, each of which would receive a score of at least “3” on the Maryland Scientific Scale.¹⁰ Last, despite the necessary “ingredients for success” outlined above, none of the SPI teams were able to document statistically

significant reductions in crime that could be linked to their interventions.

Careful review of the experiences in Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing highlights a series of important lessons regarding challenges to program implementation and impact. The common challenges experienced by the sites centered on: continuous, real-time problem analysis; program dosage; stakeholder limitations; and disentangling the effects of SPI from larger crime trends. The common struggle with these issues across the sites underscores their significance, and provides a solid foundation for an ongoing conversation among law enforcement personnel and researchers regarding common barriers and how they can be overcome. The rest of the spotlight report is devoted to initiating this dialogue.

Challenge 1: Continuous, Real-Time Problem Analysis that Identifies Persistent, Manageable Hot Spots

Recent research has demonstrated that, although crime can often be linked to a small number of high-crime places and people, it is important for law enforcement to engage in continuous, real-time problem analysis to capture shifting trends, displacement of crime or criminals, as well as the emergence of new problems.¹¹ In some cases, offenders may adapt to law enforcement strategies in order to reduce their risk of

¹⁰ Sherman, et al. (1998) developed the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods as part of the 1997 report to Congress *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*. The scale rates a study's overall internal validity on a 1 to 5 point range, with 1 representing the weakest design and 5 the strongest. The key factors influencing a study's rating are: the level of control over other variables; the potential for measurement error; and the statistical power of the analysis. For more information see: L. Sherman, D.C. Gottfredson, D.L. MacKenzie, J. Eck, P. Reuter, and S.D. Bushway. July 1998. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*. National Institute of Justice, Research in Brief. Generally, programs evaluated with methodologies that score as 3 or higher in the scientific scale may be counted as programs that ‘work,’ if other evidence supports the scientific findings.

¹¹ C.D. Uchida & M.L. Swatt. 2013. Operation LASER and the Effectiveness of Hot Spot Patrol: A Panel Analysis. *Police Quarterly* 16(3), 287-304.

apprehension (e.g., changing times, locations, or tactics).¹² In other cases, new crime problems may emerge in a jurisdiction, such as the influx of a new criminal network or the onset of a “new” form of criminal activity (e.g., see the discussion of “gold chain snatches” in the Los Angeles Smart Policing Initiative¹³). Simply put, crime reduction efforts will be weakened if they become static and are not responsive to the fluid nature of criminal activity.

The experience in Lansing demonstrates the importance of continuous, real-time problem analysis. The original Lansing intervention was primarily place-based, as the proactive enforcement and Drug Market Intervention were focused on two target neighborhoods (and offenders who lived in those neighborhoods). The geographically-driven intervention was devised based on prevailing conventional wisdom among police and researchers regarding the nature of street-level drug sales in Lansing. As the project evolved, however, it became clear that the nature of street-level drug dealing in Lansing had shifted from a traditional turf-based model to “a technologically-driven model where drug deals were made using cell phones and mobile meeting locations that took place throughout the city and its surroundings.”¹⁴ The dynamic nature of

the target problem in Lansing required the SPI team to shift their intervention (and evaluation) in relatively short order, moving away from the place-based approach (i.e., hot spots) to a strategy that was more fluid and offender-focused. Although the team’s problem analysis during the project eventually captured this changing dimension, the intervention had already been designed and implemented based on different assumptions. The Lansing team noted:

One outcome of this partnership was a greater understanding of the evolution of drug dealing in Lansing and its connection to violence. The original assumption of the evolution of a connection between drug-dealing groups and violence proved correct. The related assumption of geographically-based drug markets proved incorrect.¹⁵

It seems clear that this shift in the nature of the target problem represented a setback for the Lansing SPI team, and likely reduced the potential effectiveness of their intervention. The team goes on to state that “A goal of future SPI approaches would be to ensure the problem analysis is in place prior to the intervention design.”¹⁶

The Joliet SPI centered on an STD program that, in many ways, responded to the need for continuous, real-time problem analysis. The STD deployment

¹² J.T. Ready. 2009. *Offender Adaptation: Understanding Crime Displacement from a Micro-Level Perspective*. Newark: Rutgers University (doctoral dissertation).

¹³ C.D. Uchida & M.L. Swatt. 2012. *Smart Policing in Los Angeles: Preliminary Results*. Washington, DC: Justice and Security Strategies, Inc.

¹⁴ McGarrell et al., 2012, p. 5.

¹⁵ McGarrell et al., 2012, p. 17.

¹⁶ McGarrell et al., 2012, p. 19.

areas were selected at weekly meetings, based on analysis of the past week's criminal activity and open discussion among command personnel of the crime trends in the past week and month. However, by 2012, the Joliet police leadership realized that changes were necessary to improve the program and to enhance the problem analysis process that guided the STD program. Two specific program weaknesses were identified. First, the information exchanges between police, probation, and parole officers needed to play a more central role in the program. As a result, the SPI team placed increasing emphasis on these exchanges. Second, the program needed to "shore up" the translation of analysis generated at the STD meetings to actionable intelligence that would better guide line officer activity on the street. In order to garner additional buy-in and support from line personnel, all officers assigned to the program attended roll-call training that emphasized the purpose of the program, the need for accurate data collection (field interrogation and arrest reports), and the importance of maintaining the integrity of the identified target areas.

The Cincinnati SPI offers an interesting cautionary tale about continuous problem analysis, however. The Cincinnati SPI originally targeted two long-term robbery hot spots. During the project, the team documented a "western expansion of robberies from the central hot spot, which resulted in the target area being expanded from the initially proposed one

mile corridor to a 1.5 mile wide area."¹⁷ The research partner noted that the expansion of the target area may have limited the effectiveness of the program because the area was simply too large. Moreover, the Cincinnati team did not adequately tap the street knowledge and expertise of patrol officers, who could provide key insights and interpretation of the data analysis. The Cincinnati team also noted that crime mapping software to create hot spot maps has limitations that can result in "over-prediction," especially when larger search areas are employed in the analysis. In the end, the Cincinnati research partner concluded that the SPI may have been overly sensitive to temporary shifts in crime trends, which served to divert their attention and resources from the original problem area.

Challenge 2: Program Dosage

A growing body of research has demonstrated that crime and offenders are not evenly distributed across geographic areas.¹⁸ Crime is typically concentrated in hot spots and, in many cases, those hot spots remain remarkably stable over long periods of time. The same can be said of offenders: there are typically a small number of prolific offenders who generate a disproportionate amount of crime. These themes highlight the importance of devising intervention

¹⁷ Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p. 33.

¹⁸ A.A. Braga, A.V. Papachristos, & D.M. Hureau. 2010. The Concentration and Stability of Gun Violence at Micro Places in Boston, 1980–2008. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 26(1), 33–53.

strategies that are intensive and that are targeted on durable micro-hot spots, prolific offenders, or both. Alternatively, law enforcement strategies that lack focus and intensiveness (e.g., not enough dosage) are less likely to produce significant crime reductions.

In Joliet, the SPI team engaged in weekly crime analysis of gun violence hot spots, and STD deployments were assigned to target violence, gang activity, and other crimes in those small areas. The team also worked with probation and parole to identify high-risk offenders. This strategy was targeted both in terms of geography and offending type. However, the evaluation suggests that there may have been limitations regarding the intensiveness of the intervention, and the degree to which the effort was focused on stable hot spots. For example, the STD deployment areas were selected every week based on a review of “the past thirty day, and hour and day of week, patterns of violent crime.”¹⁹ Though the SPI focused primarily on three sectors, the STD teams were continually moving around smaller areas within those sectors. As a result, the officers’ activities were diffused—and perhaps diluted—across the sectors based on short-term analysis of crime patterns.

The intervention itself may have also lacked sufficient dosage: STD deployments involved one or two additional units assigned to preventative patrol in the targeted hot spots from 9:00

p.m. to 1:00 a.m. on weekends. The research partner examined violent crime and shots fired rates during this time-block across STD and comparison hot spots. Results indicate that there were no reductions in crime during the times when additional units were in the STD hot spots. The research partner also noted that the “lack of significant effects could reflect the impulsive, expressive nature of many violent crimes (which make them harder to prevent).”²⁰

In Lansing, there were a number of factors related to program dosage that may have mitigated the impact of their SPI. For example, the number of violent crimes in the targeted areas was relatively low (e.g., 16 or 17 per month in one target area), which presents challenges for generating significant reductions in crime. For example, in the Philadelphia Foot Patrol experiment Ratcliffe and colleagues found that the intervention generated significant reductions in crime, but only in neighborhoods where there was a threshold level of pre-intervention violence.²¹ The “ceiling effect” issue in Lansing may also be reflected in results from the SPI team’s survey of citizens in the target area. The team reported that:

Similarly, the citizen survey did not reveal significant changes among residents in the target

¹⁹ Lombardo and Sommers, 2013, p. 16.

²⁰ Lombardo and Sommers, 2013, p. 50.

²¹ J. Ratcliffe, T. Taniguchi, E.R. Groff, & J.D. Wood. 2011. The Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Police Patrol Effectiveness in Violent Crime Hotspots. *Criminology* 49(3), 795-831.

areas or compared to citizens from other parts of the city. This may reflect the fact that citizens already rated their neighborhoods as relatively safe and that they generally had quite positive attitudes toward the Lansing police.²²

Additionally, proactive patrols in the target areas were a centerpiece of the Lansing SPI. Based on crime analysis, the Lansing team concentrated the proactive patrols in the summer months over a three-year period (June and July, 2010–2012). While the team devoted substantial resources during the two-month saturation periods, it is unclear whether the temporary nature of these “crackdowns” was sufficient enough to generate crime reductions. Prior research on the impact of short-term crackdowns in targeted areas indicates that the strategy typically has limited effectiveness across a wide range of problems, from violent crime²³ to homelessness.²⁴ For example, in a Center for Problem-Oriented Policing Guide on the strategy, Scott states that, “most crackdown studies have found that any positive impact they have in reducing crime and disorder tends to disappear (or decay) rather quickly, and occasionally

even before the crackdown ends.”²⁵ Consistent with this line of research, the Lansing research partners recommended that the SPI summer enforcement patrols “should re-occur throughout the year as indicated by ongoing crime analysis.”²⁶ The Lansing team also concluded that future interventions are more likely to be successful if they are more concentrated and focus on micro hot spots (a specific address or street corner), rather than larger neighborhoods where the intervention effect may be spread too thin. The Cincinnati SPI struggled with program dosage on a few different levels. First, the Cincinnati SPI centered on advanced analysis of all three elements of the problem triangle: offenders, victims, and places. Despite this novel approach, the research partner noted that the team over-relied on traditional, quantitative data from the police department which provided only a superficial understanding of the problem.

Numerical data from police sources can only provide limited answers. It is necessary to actively explore the problem, in the local environment, to learn why it is occurring, including qualitative information, and intelligence. Some of the most useful information from this project came

²² McGarrell et al., 2012, p. 2.

²³ Sherman, L. 1990. Police Crackdowns: Initial and Residual Deterrence. In M. Tonry and N. Morris (eds.), *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, Vol. 12. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

²⁴ S. Chamard. 2010. *Homeless Encampments*. Problem-specific guide series no. 56. Washington, DC: Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.

²⁵ M. Scott. 2004. *The Benefits and Consequences of Police Crackdowns*. Police Response Guides Series Guide No. 1. Washington, DC: Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.

²⁶ McGarrell et al., 2012, p. 19.

from interviews of victims and offenders.²⁷

Superficial analysis is a theme that has emerged in many problem-oriented policing projects,²⁸ and the principal consequence of shallow analysis is typically responses that do not sufficiently address the underlying causes of the problem. The Cincinnati team documented this concern as well, noting that “a standard enforcement response [which had been ineffective in the past with the robbery problem in the target area] became the primary response for the project.”²⁹ Last, preliminary analysis of the robbery problem led to the team increasing the size of the target area substantially. In hindsight, the Cincinnati team concluded that the expansion may have created a target area that was too large and necessarily weakened the intensity of the intervention.

Challenge 3: Limitations of Key Stakeholders

One of the core tenets of the Smart Policing Initiative involves collaboration with relevant stakeholders including other criminal justice agencies, state and federal partners, residents, business owners, service providers, and advocacy groups. The SPI team should willingly

embrace the active participation of other stakeholders; but they should also be conscious that these partners—particularly criminal justice partners—may have limitations in terms of what they can offer and what they can accomplish. All three SPI teams struggled with this issue.

In Joliet, the Will County Probation Department and the Parole Division of the Illinois Department of Corrections were active participants in the SPI. Probation supervisors attended the weekly STD meetings, and the numerous exchanges of information between Joliet police and probation resulted in significant benefits for both agencies. However, the Probation Department restricts the authority of their officers in the field, which limited the enforcement options available to the Joliet SPI team. For example, probation officers are not permitted to make probation compliance checks with the Joliet Police Department. Moreover, although Illinois state law empowers probation officers to make on-view arrests of probationers who have violated their supervision conditions, the Will County Probation Department prohibits their officers from taking such action—even when a police officer provides information regarding a violation.³⁰ Rather, all suspected violations must be filed with the Will County Circuit Court, and during a court hearing, the State must establish that the violation occurred (by preponderance of

²⁷ Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p. 32.

²⁸ A.A. Braga & D. Weisburd. 2006. Problem-oriented policing: The disconnect between principles and practice. In D. Weisburd & A.A. Braga (Eds.), *Police innovation: Contrasting perspectives* (pp. 133–152). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

²⁹ Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p. 32.

³⁰ Lombardo & Sommers, 2013.

the evidence). With regard to parole, the Joliet SPI team and parole officers conducted several parole compliance sweeps. However, parolees could only be arrested if there was a new charge. Parole violations were referred to the Illinois Prison Review Board for adjudication, but because of prison overcrowding issues, the board was reluctant to revoke parole for technical violations. Also, the Joliet SPI team believed that a fair number of the shootings were committed by juveniles, many of whom were on probation. The team sought approval from the Judiciary to develop a partnership with the Juvenile Probation Department to track and monitor juvenile offenders (i.e., applying the adult probationer model). The judge denied this request.

In Lansing, the nature of the target problem shifted considerably, away from a geographic-based drug dealing in two areas to a more mobile and dispersed network of activity. The Lansing SPI team shifted the intervention aspects of the program to address the new dynamic, but unfortunately, the research partners struggled to apply a research design “on the fly” that would sufficiently capture program impact. This shift was especially problematic because it diffused the intervention well outside of the original target areas (e.g., “contamination” in research terms). Alternatively, the Lansing SPI team acknowledged the limited resources of the police department and concluded that, “the interventions would likely have had more effect if they

could be more focused and delivered more consistently to increase intensity.”³¹

In Cincinnati, the county probation and parole departments initially agreed to be active partners in the SPI, but they were unable to share their records with the SPI team. As a result, the Cincinnati SPI team could not determine how often robbery offenders were on probation or parole, both as part of their historical analysis and their robbery reduction project.³² Also, the manner in which the program was managed created some limitations within the police department and produced a tension between “project management and problem management.”³³ More specifically, members of the Department’s Problem Solving Unit were responsible for managing the project, while personnel in District 3 (which housed the target area) managed the problem. The research partner noted that not having District 3 personnel involved in project management created a disconnect in implementation of the SPI program, as different units “owned a different portion of the project.”³⁴ Moreover, there were few line personnel involved in the management of the SPI. As a result, patrol officers who were physically close to the problem and who had intimate knowledge of the target area were not included in the data analysis and response development.

³¹ McGarrell et al., 2012, p. 19.

³² Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p. 6.

³³ Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p.30.

³⁴ Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p. 30.

Challenge 4: Disentangling SPI Effects from Larger Crime Trends

In some cases, SPI sites have documented crime reductions in the target areas, but those declines are also observed in comparison areas, or across the city overall. When an SPI site experiences a crime decline, but that decline is not isolated to the target area, the team is left trying to disentangle the effects of the SPI intervention from larger crime trends in the jurisdiction, state, or nation. All three SPI sites struggled with this issue. The problem was particularly acute in Lansing because the research partners had, at the start of the project, developed a rigorous research design that included both treatment and comparison areas. Under such a design, the intervention (or SPI) is limited to the treatment area, and crime trends across both treatment and comparison areas are examined before, during, and after the intervention. If the integrity of the design is maintained (i.e., the intervention is successfully limited to the treatment area), any changes in crime that occur in the treatment area but not the comparison area may be attributed to the intervention. Unfortunately, in Lansing the integrity of the research design was compromised because of the shifting nature of the crime problem, and as a result, the research partners were unable to disentangle any SPI-specific effects from larger crime trends.

In Joliet, the SPI team also struggled to isolate the effects of the intervention, as crime reductions occurred both in the target STD areas and the comparison

areas. Moreover, the Joliet team struggled to maintain the integrity of the research design. The targeted STD patrols, a core feature of the program, intervened in other sectors throughout the city (i.e., outside of the intervention hot spots). The SPI team was also unable to limit parole enforcement to the STD target areas, either because there were too few offenders in a targeted area or because known, wanted offenders were residing in other areas of the city. As a result, the parole compliance component of the STD program was diffused through the city of Joliet. Though deviations from the planned intervention made sense operationally (e.g., the department was required to respond to emerging hot spots regardless of the research design), they may have diluted program impact in the rest of the city, thereby reducing the likelihood that the evaluation would document significant crime reductions in the targeted hot spots.

In Cincinnati, the research partner concluded that the SPI team was overly focused on robberies in the target area and gave “only small consideration for overall trends in robberies throughout the District and the City of Cincinnati.”³⁵ The team’s tendency to overlook the larger crime trends in the area led to a short-sighted examination of the impact of the interventions during the first year of operation (2011), and inhibited the modification of interventions in the second year that may have led to greater

³⁵ Eck & Gallagher, 2012, p. 34.

likelihood of crime reduction in the target area.³⁶

III. LESSONS LEARNED

Close examination of the experiences in Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing helps us identify a number of common barriers to successful SPI implementation and impact. This spotlight has highlighted problems associated with continuous, real-time crime analysis, insufficient program dosage, the limitations of various stakeholders, and disentangling the SPI effects from larger crime trends when the integrity of a research design has been compromised. Consideration of these barriers, and how the sites dealt with them, provide a number of important “takeaway messages” or lessons learned for other jurisdictions seeking to implement and evaluate evidence-based strategies.

Include a Strong Process Evaluation

The Bureau of Justice Assistance places strong emphasis on methodologically rigorous research designs as the foundation for SPI impact evaluations. Designs that can be ranked at the top of the Maryland Scale of Scientific Standards offer the greatest potential for producing evaluations that can add to the growing literature on evidence-based policing.³⁷ This emphasis on rigorous design, which usually involves

quantitative methods, should not come at the expense of a strong process evaluation, however. The process evaluation adds richness and context to the impact evaluation, thereby providing a level of detail that is ordinarily not part of standard quantitative research designs. A solid process evaluation will tell the complete story of what happened (and what did not happen) in a site. One of the most important aspects of process evaluation is program implementation. Was the program implemented as intended? What obstacles arose during implementation? Were the obstacles solved or mitigated, and if so, how? A strong process evaluation can identify where implementation fell short and can offer insights on how other sites can anticipate and overcome challenges to implementation.

The Joliet SPI team included a comprehensive process evaluation that captured the development and implementation of the STD program over the two-year project period. The research partner attended weekly STD meetings, interviewed core members of the SPI team, reviewed relevant documents, conducted ride-alongs with STD patrol officers, and observed parole compliance checks. The research partner sought to determine the extent to which the STD program was implemented as originally intended, as well as to assess the degree to which police and probation/parole authorities benefitted from the new, expanded partnerships. The research partner concluded: “Overall, the Joliet Police

³⁶ Eck & Gallagher, 2012.

³⁷ Sherman et al., 1998.

Department was successful in implementing the STD process: crime and intelligence data were analyzed, STD areas were determined, officers were re-deployed to the STD hot spot areas, and information was regularly exchanged with probation and parole authorities.”³⁸

Additionally, the process evaluation allows for a thorough understanding of the potential explanations for why a particular program did not produce the intended crime reduction benefits. The insights provided by the process evaluations in Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing are described throughout this Spotlight and include issues associated with intervention dosage, challenges which inhibited more active involvement by key stakeholders, and threats to the integrity of the research design. In Cincinnati, the process evaluation identified problems with the size of the target area (i.e., too big), highlighted an over-emphasis on traditional law enforcement data which limited understanding of the causes of the problem, and documented issues with project management that may have impeded the successful implementation and evaluation of the project. Moreover, the Cincinnati SPI was part of a larger effort to change the police department and the way it deals with crime. The other, sometimes competing, reform strategies represent an important backdrop for consideration of the SPI’s impact.³⁹ In

Lansing, the process evaluation effectively captured the course-correction made by the SPI team, after realizing that the nature of drug dealing had changed from identifiable drug markets to more mobile and fluid transactions. Though the research partners struggled to modify the impact evaluation to sufficiently account for these changes, the process evaluation captured this information, which provided important context for consideration of the findings.

Think Broadly about Impact

The experiences from Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing highlight the importance of taking a broad view of “impact” when thinking about the effect of a particular intervention. In short, failure to document a “statistically significant” impact on crime does not mean the entire effort was fruitless. Impact, which is distinct from effectiveness, can be achieved in a number of different ways. In each site, the SPI left police and researchers with a better understanding of crime and violence in their jurisdictions (including the offenders who commit those crimes). SPI also led to new and continuing partnerships between law enforcement, other criminal justice agencies, advocacy and social service groups, and criminal justice researchers. Moreover, in each site, project leaders gained a clearer picture of the strategies most likely to be effective in accomplishing their objectives.

³⁸ Lombardo and Sommers, 2013, p. ix.

³⁹ For a full review of the larger Cincinnati reform effort, see: Eck, J.E. 2014. *The Status of Collaborative Problem*

solving and Community Problem-Oriented Policing in Cincinnati. University of Cincinnati.

In Cincinnati, the SPI team tested and disproved several assumptions about robbery offenders. For example, through intensive quantitative analysis and detailed offender interviews, the Cincinnati team found that most offenders live in or near the target area; they discovered the same was true for robbery victims. And despite current thinking among local enforcement and researchers, the analysis determined that: there is little connectivity between offenders (weak social and criminal networks); robbery offenders commit a range of different offenses (e.g., do not specialize in just robberies); and as a result, there are no identifiable convergent settings for offenders. Last, the analysis showed that there is little overlap between victimization and offending.⁴⁰ Quite simply, the intensive analysis of robbery identified a number of important features of the crime, and those who commit it, which challenged conventional wisdom and substantially improved the SPI team's understanding of this crime. This knowledge gained in Cincinnati represents a significant SPI impact.

In Joliet, the SPI centered on a new collaborative approach among the Joliet Police Department, the Will County Probation Department, and the Parole Division of the Illinois Department of Corrections. The research partner documented more than 200 specific information exchanges among the Joliet

Police Department and probation authorities. Moreover, Joliet police were permitted to select which parolees would be targeted for compliance checks based upon gun violence and gang activity intelligence. Specific examples of information exchanges among police, probation, and parole included the following:

- Gang-involved parolees and probationers were identified, monitored, and cross-checked with shooting incidents (i.e., for potential involvement) on a regular basis.
- Joliet police officers assisted Illinois Department of Corrections parole officers when they conducted sweeps of parolees.
- Attending STD meetings apprised probation and parole officers of current hot spots in Joliet, thereby increasing probation and parole officer safety.
- Joliet police officers accompanied probation officers when they confiscated weapons after a court conviction, thereby reducing the number of weapons available on the street.
- Joliet police officers cooperated in building cases on parolees and probationers who had violated the terms of their release.⁴¹

The value of the new partnerships between police, probation, and parole

⁴⁰ Eck & Gallagher, 2013.

⁴¹ Lombardo & Sommers, 2013, p. 3-4.

authorities cannot be easily quantified in an impact evaluation. But the process evaluation captured the richness of the information exchanges, thereby providing tangible evidence of hard-to-measure positive impacts from the Joliet SPI.

This information was analyzed, integrated, and shared at Strategic Tactical Deployment meetings, where weekly geo-focused Strategic Tactical Deployment assignments were made. By distributing this information, street-level officers were able to use probation/parole information to assist them in their shooting investigations. Police officers also became additional, around the clock, eyes and ears for probation and parole authorities.⁴²

Similar program impacts were documented in Lansing. In particular, the research partners noted that “one outcome of this partnership was a greater understanding of the evolution of drug dealing in Lansing and its connection to violence.”⁴³ Moreover, although there was an existing relationship between the Lansing Police Department and researchers at Michigan State University, the SPI strengthened the relationship and expanded the collaboration to other faculty at the University and other officers in the department. The SPI in Lansing produced new partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club and other service

providers, and led to the creation of a new regional task force called the Violent Crime Initiative. The research partners’ conclusions about the impact of the Focused Deterrence program are especially poignant:

Despite the lack of a comparison group, there was evidence that the program had a significant impact on the 10 successful program completers. All of the successful cases were shown to be drug-free through drug testing and a number of these individuals reported that they were drug free for the first time in years. At least five were working and a similar number had either completed their GED, were attending high school, or were enrolled in college. A significant number had also regained custody of their children. Given that prior research shows high rates of recidivism for drug-involved offenders... the fact that these ten individuals have remained crime and drug free for six months to several years represents personal success and reduced criminal justice expenses.

IV. CONCLUSION

The three SPI sites described in this Spotlight—Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing—successfully implemented the foundational principles of the Smart Policing Initiative. The sites engaged in advanced problem analysis; the teams

⁴² Lombardo & Sommers, 2013, p. 3.

⁴³ McGarrell et al., 2012, p. 17.

were collaborative; the interventions were data driven, comprehensive, and grounded in evidence-based practices; and the projects were evaluated using rigorous quasi-experimental research designs. Though, in each case, the research partner(s) was unable to attribute crime declines in the target area to the SPI intervention, the experiences in Cincinnati, Joliet, and Lansing are still illustrative for the law enforcement and academic research communities, and the lessons learned represent an important guide for continued discussions regarding implementation and impact that can advance the discourse over evidence-based practices in policing.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael D. White, Ph.D., is a Professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University, and is Associate Director of ASU's Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety. He is also a Subject Matter Expert for BJA's Smart Policing Initiative, and is a Senior Diagnostic Specialist for the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) Diagnostic Center. He received his Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from Temple

University in 1999. Prior to entering academia, Dr. White worked as a deputy sheriff in Pennsylvania. Dr. White's primary research interests involve the police, including use of force, training, and misconduct. His recent work has been published in *Justice Quarterly*, *Criminology & Public Policy*, *Crime & Delinquency*, and *Criminal Justice and Behavior*.