SPI Core Principle: Collaboration

Building community relationships is a key strategy for fighting crime and addressing community problems, as well as an important method for colloabtive governance. This message was consistently expressed by both law enforcement and community presenters at a series of Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) Police-Community Collaboration Workshops held throughout 2016 in Portland, Oregon; Kansas City, Missouri; and Lowell, Massachusetts. These workshops were developed in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program, and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. Many examples of successful collaboration were presented—including Indio, California's efforts to address homelessness; Kansas City, Missouri's partnerships to reduce homicide; and Cambridge, Massachusett's response to the opioid crisis—as were their respective challenges encountered in the process. For each of these SPI sites, collaboration with community members and organizations was key to the success of the initiative.

As a result of these discussions, SPI developed a clear set of principles to guide police agencies in their efforts to expand and improve police-community collaboration, including:

- Having strong leadership
- Orienting toward service
- Transforming training
- Building community relationships, including multi-sector collaborative partnerships
- Engaging with diverse communities
- Improving communication and messaging
- Understanding community perspectives

Participants at an SPI Community Collaboration Workshop

Successful collaboration is not easy, but it provides tremendous benefits to police and communities for collaborative problem solving. All workshop participants affirmed this viewpoint. The principles are described more fully in the report *Smart Policing Collaboration Principles*.

About Us

SPI is a collaborative effort among the Bureau of Justice Assistance, CNA, state and local law enforcement agencies, and researchers. It is designed to assist agencies with identifying innovative and evidence-based solutions to effectively and efficiently tackle chronic crime problems in their jurisdictions.

As always, feel free to share your thoughts and experiences with us at SPI@cna.org.

can sign up for the SPI mailing list online at http://bit.ly/1M6qLhP.

INSIDE...

Smart Policing Initiative: Site Findings

The **Los Angeles SPI**'s Operation LASER (Los Angeles' Strategic Extraction and Restoration Program) combined place and offender strategies with the use of criminal intelligence data, resulting in a reduction in homicides by more than 22 percent per month in the target division (Newton) and a decrease in gun crimes by 5 percent in each reporting district of the target division. The Los Angeles SPI has institutionalized Smart Policing/Operation LASER across the department.

The **Kansas City SPI** aimed to reduce violent crime, particularly gun-related violence, using social network analysis and a focused-deterrence pulling-lever strategy called the "Kansas City No Violence Alliance" (KC NoVA). An interrupted time series analysis found the SPI reduced homicides by 40 percent and gun-related aggravated assaults by 19 percent.

The **Boston SPI**'s problem-oriented strategy focused on micro-level hot spots that reduced aggravated assaults by more than 15 percent, violent crime by more than 17 percent, and robberies by more than 19 percent.

The **Baltimore SPI's** strategy of targeted enforcement within selected crime hot spots reduced homicides by 27 percent, and a related focused-deterrence intervention reduced non-fatal shootings in one neighborhood by 40 percent. Baltimore's SPI also included a Gun Offender Registry, which reduced gun-related re-offending risks among participants by 92 percent.

The **New Haven SPI** addressed rising violent crime rates and local shooting incidents by increasing the use of data-driven decision making (modified problem-oriented policing) in daily police operations (enhanced foot patrols). Over the 13-week intervention period, the target area (Newhallville) experienced a 19 percent reduction in violent crime and a 36 percent reduction in violent crime within the high-risk areas.

The **Phoenix SPI** evaluated the deployment and use of body-worn cameras (BWCs). The study found that officer compliance with the activation of BWCs was generally low (under 30 percent), varying by call type (between 6 percent and 48 percent). Police perceptions of BWCs changed over time: BWCs seemed to increase arrest activity, and BWCs appeared to significantly reduce complaints against officers (23 percent decrease) when compared with officers in the other squad area (a 10 percent increase).

The **Pullman SPI** revealed that closed-circuit televisions (CCTVs) in crime hot spots provided direct evidence of criminal activity that was used by prosecutors, including in a high-profile case involving a violent assault on a local professor. The CCTVs also allowed police to intervene early in situations involving behaviors that might have led to serious crimes or posed a safety risk.

The **Palm Beach SPI** included targeted efforts, including a community liaison, to increase police legitimacy, improve police-community relations, and reduce victimization. Resident surveys indicate that immigrants' attitudes toward the police improved, including higher levels of satisfaction and trust in police.

The **Lowell SPI** has institutionalized the use of data to identify and understand the dynamics of chronic crime locations by modifying Compstat to be a forum for strategic problem solving and increased communication with the Crime Analysis and Intelligence Unit.

Look for an SPI webinar this spring focused on highlighting findings from the SPI community!

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TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (TTA) TOPIC SPOTLIGHT
Peer Exchanges

The Bureau of Justice Assistance provides SPI site grantees (police and researchers) with the opportunity to learn about various evidence-based best practices and strategies from other cities within and outside of the SPI community. In some cases, peer learning takes place at technical assistance workshops or other venues in which participants explore and share strategies for implementing and sustaining Smart Policing principles.

In other cases, CNA (the SPI TTA Provider) facilitates site exchanges for SPI grantees to show and observe practical implementation strategies in person. Peer exchanges promote collaboration and information sharing that solidify our vision of building a Smart Policing "community of practice" and expose SPI sites to alternative and emerging policing practices.

To learn more about SPI peer exchanges, go to: http://www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/tta/peer-peer-exchanges.

If you are an SPI site that would like to request a peer exchange, contact SPI@cna.org or your subject matter experts.

Participants in a peer exchange with the Boston and Memphis SPI sites.

Recent SPI Outcomes: Boston, MA

Improving Homicide Clearances Using Organizational Changes

By Keri Richardson (SPI Analyst)

Project Focus

Boston, Massachusetts, has a population of over 660,000, served by the Boston Police Department (BPD), which has over 2,100 officers. The homicide clearance rate within the BPD was significantly lower than the national average before its SPI intervention in 2011. BPD was able to clear 44 percent of investigated homicides, while U.S. law enforcement was able to clear 63 percent between 2004 and 2011. Understanding that the department needed to improve the homicide unit's capacity to provide justice to victims and their families by apprehending and holding offenders accountable, BPD developed enhanced post-homicide investigation processes and practices through its SPI.

> In 2010, the Department was well below the national clearance rate of 60 percent. We needed practices to be looked at, and resources to be identified, to help our investigators solve these cases. It's important to have our clearance numbers reflect BPD's Homicide Unit's dedication to bringing these suspects to justice and bring peace to the families that have lost their loved ones.
>
> -BPD Commissioner William Evans

Objectives

The goal of the 2011 BPD SPI was to improve investigative practices in order to increase clearance rates for homicides. In a review of research and best practices across national and international police departments, the Boston SPI team found that implementing strategic management approaches (such as increased interactions with victims and witnesses, decentralizing detective assignments, training investigative personnel, and improving investigative procedures) could influence clearance rates. Homicide clearance rates could also be influenced by other factors, including whether the officer responded within 30 minutes, whether a murder weapon was found at the scene, prosecutorial involvement, interaction with the

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medical examiner, documentation of the crime scene, and training of detective personnel.

Boston police officers engage with the community

Implementation

The SPI team, with support from Northeastern University researchers, completed a statistical analysis of Boston homicide victimization, investigation, and clearances between 2007 and 2011. BPD established a homicide advisory committee to identify best practices and possible improvements to its investigative processes. BPD made a large investment in its investigative resources by refining existing practices, developing documentation tools, purchasing forensic equipment, enhancing training, hiring additional homicide detectives, and hiring a civilian crime analyst. During the course of these reforms, BPD's investigative homicide personnel expanded by over 35 percent.

An important part of this intervention was the implementation of a standard set of protocols for investigating homicides such as creating a crime scene entry log scribe, increasing the number of forensic technicians assigned to crime scenes, and improving collaboration with homicide prosecutors. "We took a hard look at how we approach these investigations and tried to internally figure out ways to improve," said Gregory Long, Superintendent of the Bureau of Investigative Services. "Our ultimate goal is to identify perpetrators and bring well-prepared cases to trial."

Police Commissioner William B. Evans added, "My homicide unit never stops looking to hold someone accountable for taking the life of somebody's loved one. The fact that the improved investigative protocols have brought about a significant increase in the number of cases cleared is not only encouraging but is also a testament to the hard work being done every day by the men and women of the Boston Police Department."

> *As part of the SPI, BPD took a critical look at how we conducted homicide investigations from the initial response through trial. Moving forward, we will continuously examine how we conduct these investigations and enact changes through best practices to ensure they meet the highest standards.*
>
> -BPD Superintendent Gregory Long

Findings

The data suggest that the SPI intervention has resulted in increased resources in investigations and increased activities intended to clear cases. An evaluation conducted by its research partner, Dr. Anthony Braga, shows that BPD increased its yearly homicide clearance rate by 10 percent. The intervention improved the likelihood of clearing cases with challenging characteristics, and homicides were 43 percent more likely to be cleared.

Dr. Braga noted, "BPD's homicide unit deserves a lot of credit for their willingness to share their experiences and investigative files with external researchers. Their investment in the process made the research stronger and greatly improved the implementation of the enhanced investigation interventions. Research and development projects on sensitive topics, such as homicide investigations, are simply not possible without the support and involvement of both the police department command staff and line-level personnel."

Lessons Learned

This project demonstrates how changes in the approach to homicide investigations can help investigators hold serious offenders accountable for their crimes. Changes to homicide investigations can support the development of a robust "information chain" from witnesses and physical evidence to improve investigators' ability to hold offenders accountable. In their review of the available evidence on factors associated with homicide clearance rates, John Jarvis (Federal Bureau of Investigation) and Wendy Regoeczi (Cleveland State University) suggested that "the most effective investigative practices must be determined from a synthesis of both community factors and individual case factors and mold to the particular context in which these crimes occur."

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Recent and Upcoming SPI Activities

- **BJA Smart Fellows Academy:** The Smart Suite Researcher-Practitioner Fellows Academy took place February 7–10, 2017 in Denver, Colorado, and was aimed at building capacity for identifying and responding to emerging and chronic crime problems, analyzing these problems, linking strategies to research-based practice, and developing a culture of experimentation to further develop and sustain evidence-based practices. For more information, please visit the Academy page.

- **SPI Collaboration Webinar:** On February 22, 2017, the Smart Policing Initiative presented a webinar on "The Benefits of Collaborative Policing." This policing approach, which combines collaboration with problem-solving and evidence-based policing, builds community trust, support, and cooperation, while achieving more effective and long-lasting crime-reduction benefits. Hildy Saizow, SPI Senior Subject Matter Expert, facilitated this webinar, which featured presentations from Jason Cooper with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and BJA's Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation (BCJI) Program; Sandra Espadas from the San Bernardino, California, BCJI site; and Inspector Bill Barritt from the Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, SPI site. A recording of this webinar has been posted to the SPI YouTube channel.

- **SPI New Findings Webinar:** On May 10, 2017 from 2:00-3:30 p.m. eastern, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) will present a webinar on "New Findings in SPI." Since SPI began in 2009, over 50 SPI projects have been funded to test and evaluate evidence-based policing tactics and strategies. This webinar will feature four SPI sites—Boston, MA, Cambridge, MA, Los Angeles, CA, and Rochester, NY—that recently completed their evaluation research. Representatives from each site will highlight the Smart Policing process implemented (data analysis, strategy development, and implementation), as well as the process and outcome evaluation findings as they relate to their projects:
  - Boston, MA: Improving Homicide Clearances Using an Experimental Design
  - Cambridge, MA: Reducing Crime with Problem-Solving and Collaborative Focused-Deterrence
  - Los Angeles, CA: Institutionalizing Operation LASER in the Los Angeles Police Department
  - Rochester, NY: Reducing Violent Retaliatory Disputes with Problem-Solving

  This webinar will conclude by describing overarching findings and lessons learned since the inception of SPI, as it relates to the use of various Smart Policing strategies (e.g., offender-based, place-based, organizational change, predictive analytics, technology) to address a variety of crime problems (gun violence, gangs, property crime, homicides, domestic violence, and more). Register for this webinar now!

- **Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Conference:** On March 23 and 24, 2017, the Smart Policing Initiative participated in two sessions at the 2017 Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences Annual Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri. The first was a panel on "New findings from the Smart Policing Initiative," including presentations from the Milwaukee, Brooklyn Park, and Roanoke County SPIs as well as SPI subject matter experts on social network analysis from Kansas City, MO. The second was a roundtable on "Making Smart Policing Happen: Facing challenges in police agency organizational change," featuring discussion from several SPI sites about their experiences addressing organizational change through their initiatives. For more information, visit: http://www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/spi-events.

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THE READER'S CORNER – SOCIAL MEDIA, POLICING, AND TRUST

By Anita Ravishankar (Political Science and Public Policy Ph.D. Candidate, University of Michigan)

Over the past decade, a rapidly evolving digital technology landscape has led to dramatic shifts in the way individuals receive, seek, and share information. The 2016 Pew Center Social Media Update national survey found that nearly 80 percent of adult internet users in the United States (68 percent of all American adults) use some type of social networking site, with Facebook being the most commonly used platform. In response to this behavior shift, law enforcement agencies, as well as other government entities, have changed the ways that they provide information to and engage with individuals. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police Center for Social Media directory, over 2,700 U.S. law enforcement agencies use Facebook, Twitter, and/or YouTube, among other social media tools.[1] For many departments, these platforms are now a critical component of community engagement and police investigations, providing police with unique opportunities to both prevent and solve crimes.

In boosting police capacity to achieve key operational goals and embrace their role as guardians of society, social media can potentially be an important tool for building public trust in and perceived legitimacy of the police, a key focus area identified in the *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. This outcome might be achieved via a variety of mechanisms. First, the more casual, conversational tone and interactive nature of social media can help humanize both police and the communities they serve, shifting away from "us vs. them" narratives and allowing both parties to see each other as "people like us." In addition, by sharing information on investigative progress and outcomes (e.g., suspect X in crime Y identified; missing person Z found and returned to family), the public can observe police competence and diligence in solving cases, which can also contribute to perceptions of police legitimacy.

However, though it offers many advantages, social media also raises a number of challenges for police to confront. While interactions that are documented or facilitated via these platforms can help deepen police-community relations, the speed and public nature of social media that can amplify a positive interaction (generating good will and trust) can do the same with a negative or flat-footed post, generating backlash and perceptions of ineptitude or distrust. Also, as police use social media platforms for investigative purposes, they must consider privacy and civil liberties concerns, as appearances of overzealous, "Big Brother"-like surveillance via social media can rapidly breach public trust.

Ultimately, given the relatively recent nature of this phenomenon, more research on the relationship between police use of social media and public perceptions is necessary to better understand public expectations of police, as well as how police social media behavior combines with offline activities to shape public opinion. What we do know, however, is that "the promise of social media for policing is not to transform or add to the work of law enforcement but to emphasize the deep connection with the community that has always been the focus of good police work" (Davis et al 2014: 2). To harness that promise, police use of social media requires a carefully considered policy, rigorous training, and an intentional strategy that accounts for the unique tone, timing, and structure of social media platforms.

Resources

Broussard, Meredith. 2015. "When Cops Check Facebook." *The Atlantic*. April 15, 2015.
   https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/when-cops-check-facebook/390882/ (accessed January 6, 2017).

Crump, Jeremy. 2011. "What Are the Police Doing on Twitter? Social Media, the Police and the Public." *Policy and Internet* 3(4): 1–27.

Davis, Edward F. III, Alejandro A. Alves, and David Alan Sklansky. 2014. "Social Media and Police Leadership: Lessons From Boston." *New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. NCJ 244760.

Violence Reduction Network Clearinghouse, https://www.vrnetwork.org/Clearinghouse (search "social media").

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[1] This statistic was obtained from the now-inactive IACP Center for Social Media directory. A search for U.S. law enforcement agencies using Facebook, Twitter, and/or YouTube produced a list of 2,746 agencies (as of February 1, 2017).