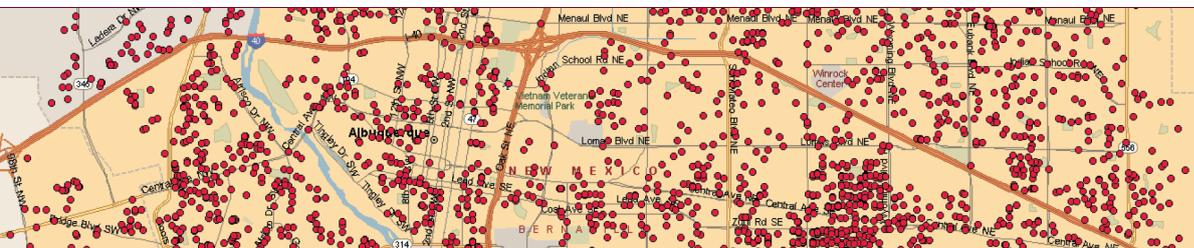




Crime Prevention Research Review

No. 2

Police Enforcement Strategies to Prevent Crime in Hot Spot Areas



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The Campbell Collaboration



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Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	5
Identifying Evaluations of Hot Spots Policing Programs.....	9
Characteristics of Hot Spots Policing Programs	13
Effects of Hot Spots Policing Programs on Crime and Disorder	17
Displacement and Diffusion Effects	21
Conclusion and Policy Implications	23
References	27

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A note regarding the *Crime Prevention Research Review Series*

The research included in this Crime Prevention Research Review is limited to studies that use experimental or quasi-experimental designs and meet the criteria for rigor as laid out in The Campbell Collaboration Crime and Justice Group review criteria (see <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/guidelines.asp>). It is important to note that other pieces of evidence regarding the effectiveness of various strategies were excluded from this research. The popular series of *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* (POP Guides) published by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) differs significantly from this review because the standards for inclusion of evidence are less tied to the use of experimental designs and thus include a wider range of evidence.

“Police Enforcement Strategies to Prevent Crime in Hot Spot Areas” is the second in the *Crime Prevention Research Review Series*. The first publication in the series is “Disrupting Street-Level Drug Markets.” Both are available from the COPS Office, www.cops.usdoj.gov.



Given the growing popularity of this approach to crime prevention, a review of existing evaluations of hot spots policing programs can help police executives and policymakers understand what works in preventing crime in hot spot areas.



Introduction

Introduction

Hot spots policing has become a very popular way for police departments to prevent crime. A Police Foundation report found that 7 in 10 departments with more than 100 sworn officers reported using crime mapping to identify crime hot spots (Weisburd et al., 2001). Recent research studies suggest that focused police interventions, such as directed patrols, proactive arrests, and problem-oriented policing, can produce significant gains in crime prevention at high-crime hot spots (Eck, 1997, 2002; Braga, 2002; Weisburd and Eck, 2004). Given the growing popularity of this approach to crime prevention, a review of existing evaluations of hot spots policing programs can help police executives and policymakers understand what works in preventing crime in hot spot areas.

Police officers have long recognized the importance of place in crime problems. Police officers know the locations in their beats that tend to be trouble spots and are often very sensitive to signs of potential crimes across the places that comprise their beats. As Bittner (1970) suggests in his classic study of police work, some officers know “the shops, stores, warehouses, restaurants, hotels, schools, playgrounds, and other public places in such a way that they can recognize at a glance whether what is going on within them is within the range of normalcy.” At the organizational level, the traditional police response to such trouble spots typically included heightened levels of patrol and increased opportunistic arrests and investigations. Until recently, police crime-prevention strategies did not focus systematically on crime hot spots and did not seek to address the underlying conditions that give rise to high-activity crime places.

Unlike most innovations in policing, the emergence of hot spots policing can be traced to the development of computerized mapping and database technologies and the growing academic interest in the importance of specific places in understanding crime problems (Weisburd and Braga, 2006). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of research studies documented that crime is not spread evenly across city landscapes; rather, that crime clusters in very small places, or hot spots, that generate a disproportionate amount of criminal events (Pierce et al., 1988; Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989; Weisburd et al., 1992). In Minneapolis, for instance, only 3 percent of the city’s addresses accounted for 50 percent of calls for service to the police (Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989).

In Jersey City, about 4 percent of streets and intersection areas generated nearly half of the city's narcotics arrests and almost 42 percent of the disorder arrests (Weisburd and Green Mazerolle, 2000). Even in the most crime-ridden neighborhoods, crime clusters in a few discrete locations, while other areas are relatively crime free (Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989). A number of police policymakers and researchers have suggested that many crime problems can be reduced more efficiently if police officers focused their attention to these deviant places (Sherman and Weisburd, 1995; Weisburd and Green, 1995). The appeal of focusing limited resources on a small number of high-activity crime places is straightforward. If we can prevent crime at hot spot locations, then we might be able to reduce total crime.

Hand-developed pin maps have been used widely in police departments for more than half a century (Weisburd and McEwen, 1997) and there are isolated examples of what today would be defined as hot spots policing in earlier periods (Weiss, 2001). A recent study by Weisburd and Lum (2005), however, suggests that the adoption of the hot spots policing strategy among larger police agencies during the late 1990s and early 2000s was linked to the extensive diffusion of innovation in computerized crime mapping and the dissemination of research studies documenting the potential effectiveness of preventing crime in hot spot areas. CompStat, a police management and accountability model that seeks to focus police organizations on specific problems and empower them to identify and solve those problems, was developed in 1994 by then Commissioner William Bratton and the New York City Police Department. The widespread adoption of CompStat in other police agencies can also be credited with growing practical interest in hot spots policing (Weisburd et al., 2001). Dealing with crime hot spots is now a common crime-prevention strategy engaged by many American police departments.

“The appeal of focusing limited resources on a small number of high-activity crime places is straightforward. If we can prevent crime at hot spot locations, then we might be able to reduce total crime.”

Identifying Evaluations of Hot Spots Policing Programs

¹These evaluation designs permit the clearest assessments of “cause and effect” in determining whether hot spots policing programs prevent crime. These designs examine preprogram and postprogram measurements of crime outcomes in targeted locations relative to “control” locations. The control groups in the identified hot spots evaluations received routine levels of traditional police enforcement tactics.

Identifying Evaluations of Hot Spots Policing Programs

The effectiveness of focused police efforts to prevent crime in hot spot areas was examined by reviewing all available academic studies evaluating hot spots policing programs. To be eligible for this review, programs used to control crime hot spots were limited to police enforcement efforts. Suitable police enforcement efforts included traditional tactics such as directed patrol and heightened levels of traffic enforcement, as well as alternative strategies such as aggressive disorder enforcement and problem-oriented policing with limited situational responses and limited engagement of the public. To be included in this review of research, eligible problem-oriented policing initiatives must engage primarily traditional policing tactics such as law enforcement actions, informal counseling and cautioning, and referrals to other agencies. Problem-oriented policing programs that involved nontraditional interventions implemented by other stakeholders such as community members, business owners, or resident managers, were not considered because of the complexities of separating the crime-prevention effects associated with enforcement-based responses from community-based responses.

Eligible program evaluations were also limited to police programs that targeted small areas such as street corners, homes, apartment buildings, and subway stations. Police programs that focused on large areas, such as an entire neighborhood, were not considered. Identified studies were further screened to ensure that rigorous evaluation designs, such as randomized experiments and quasi-experiments, were used.¹ Particular attention was paid to studies that measured crime displacement effects and diffusion of crime-control benefit effects. Policing strategies focused on specific locations have been criticized as resulting in displacement (Repetto, 1976); that is, criminals at targeted locations would simply move around the corner to areas that were not protected by focused police attention. More recently, academics have observed that crime-prevention programs may result in the complete opposite of displacement—that crime-control benefits were greater than expected and spill over into places beyond the target areas (Clarke and Weisburd, 1994).

The review was not restricted to a specific period and relevant studies written in languages other than English were obtained and translated wherever possible. Eligible studies include published as well as unpublished works (journal articles, theses/dissertations, reports, books,

book chapters, and conference papers). See Braga (2001 and 2005) for further details of the systematic search methodology. A total of 697 article summaries were reviewed for any suggestion of an evaluation of a hot-spots policing program. Of the 697 summaries, 57 were selected for closer review and the full-text reports, journal articles, and books for these evaluations were acquired and carefully assessed to determine whether the interventions involved focused police enforcement efforts at crime hot spots and whether the studies used rigorous evaluation designs. Using these methods, nine hot spots policing evaluations were identified and included in this review:

1. Minneapolis Repeat Call Address Policing (RECAP) Program
(Sherman, Buerger, and Gartin, 1989)
2. Minneapolis Hot-Spots Patrol Program (Sherman and Weisburd, 1995)
3. Jersey City Drug Markets Analysis Program (DMAP) (Weisburd and Green, 1995)
4. Jersey City Problem-Oriented Policing at Violent Places Project
(Braga, Weisburd, Waring, Green Mazerolle, Spelman, and Gajewski, 1999)
5. St. Louis Problem-Oriented Policing (POP) in Three Drug Market Locations Study
(Hope, 1994)
6. Kansas City Gun Project (Sherman and Rogan, 1995a)
7. Kansas City Crack House Police Raids Program (Sherman and Rogan, 1995b)
8. Houston Targeted Beat Program (Caeti, 1999)
9. Beenleigh (Australia) Calls for Service Project (Criminal Justice Commission, 1998)

The enforcement problem-oriented policing strategy resulted in significant reductions in total calls for service and total crime incidents, as well as varying reductions in all subcategories of crime types.

Characteristics of the
Hot-Spots Policing Programs

Characteristics of the Hot-Spots Policing Programs

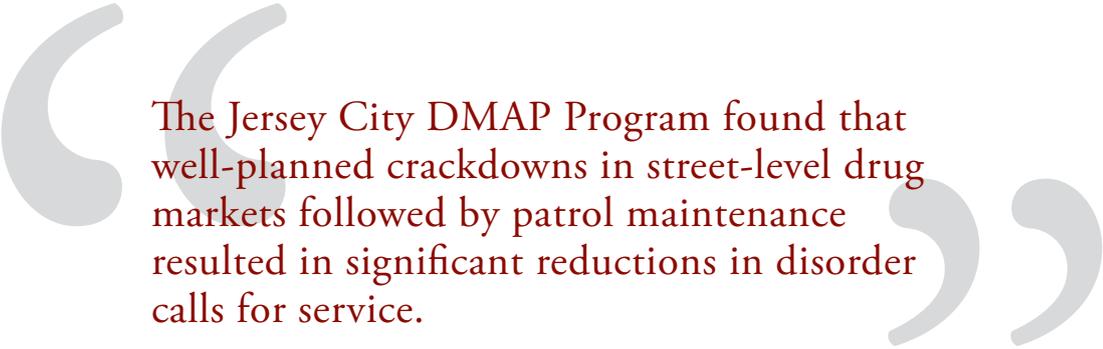
The nine evaluations were conducted in five large cities in the United States and one suburb in Australia. Police programs to prevent crime at hot spots fell into three broad categories: enforcement problem-oriented policing programs, directed and aggressive patrol programs, and police crackdowns and raids (Table 1). The effects of problem-oriented policing initiatives comprising mostly traditional tactics with limited situational responses were evaluated in the Minneapolis RECAP Program, Jersey City POP at Violent Places Study, St. Louis POP at Drug Market Locations Study, and the Beenleigh (Australia) Calls for Service Project. The evaluation of the Houston Targeted Beat Program examined the effects of three types of police strategies applied in different target areas; these strategies included high-visibility patrol, “zero tolerance” disorder policing, and enforcement problem-oriented policing. The Kansas City Gun Project examined the gun violence-prevention effects of proactive patrol and intensive enforcement of firearms laws through safety frisks during traffic stops, plain-view searches and seizures, and searches incident to arrests on other charges. The Minneapolis Hot-Spots Patrol program evaluated the effects of increased levels of preventive patrol on crime. The Jersey City DMAP and Kansas City Crack House Raids programs evaluated the effects of well-planned crackdowns on street-level drug markets and court-authorized raids on crack houses, respectively.

The nine evaluations used crime-incident report data and citizen emergency calls for service data as official indicators of crime. Although official data are widely used for assessing trends and patterns of crime, these data do have shortcomings. For instance, crime-incident data are biased by police decisions not to record all crimes reported by citizens (Black, 1970). Call data are subject to both underreporting (e.g., a lack of telephones in poverty-stricken places) and overreporting (e.g., two separate calls reporting the same incident risk being counted as two distinct events; see Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989; Klinger and Bridges, 1997). Call data, however, are suggested to be more reliable measures of crime and crime-related activity than incident data or arrest data (Pierce, Spaar, and Briggs, 1988). Most notably, citizen calls for service are affected less heavily by police discretion than other official data sources (Warner and Pierce, 1993); therefore, call data are often regarded as “the widest ongoing data collection net for criminal events in the city” (Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989: 35).

Table 1: Hot Spots Policing Programs.

Source: Adapted from Braga (2001).

Study	Program Elements
Minneapolis (MN) RECAP Sherman, Buerger, and Gartin (1989)	Problem-oriented policing to control crime at high-activity addresses; interventions comprised mostly traditional enforcement tactics with some situational responses.
Minneapolis (MN) Hot Spots Sherman and Weisburd (1995)	Increased uniformed police patrol in crime hot spot areas; treatment group, on average, experienced twice as much patrol presence as the control group.
Jersey City (NJ) DMAP Weisburd and Green (1995)	Well-planned crackdowns on street-level drug markets followed by preventive patrol to maintain crime control gains
Jersey City (NJ) POP at Violent Places Braga et al. (1999)	Problem-oriented policing to prevent crime at violent hot spot areas; interventions comprised mostly aggressive disorder enforcement tactics with some situational responses.
St. Louis (MO) POP in Three Drug Areas Hope (1994)	Problem-oriented policing to prevent crime at three high-drug activity addresses; interventions comprised mostly traditional enforcement tactics with some situational responses.
Kansas City (MO) Crack House Raids Sherman and Rogan (1995a)	Court-authorized raids on crack houses conducted by uniformed police officers.
Kansas City (MO) Gun Project Sherman and Rogan (1995b)	Intensive enforcement of laws against illegally carrying concealed firearms in targeted beat through safety frisks during traffic stops, plain view, and searches incident to arrest on other charges.
Houston (TX) Targeted Beat Program Caeti (1999)	Patrol initiative designed to reduce Index crimes in seven beats: Three beats used “high visibility patrol” at hot spots Three beats used “zero tolerance” policing at hot spots One beat used a problem-oriented policing approach that comprised mostly traditional tactics to control hot spots.
Beenleigh (AUS) Calls for Service Project Criminal Justice Commission (1998)	Problem-oriented policing to control crime at high-activity crime addresses; interventions comprised mostly traditional enforcement tactics with some situational responses.



The Jersey City DMAP Program found that well-planned crackdowns in street-level drug markets followed by patrol maintenance resulted in significant reductions in disorder calls for service.

Effects of Hot Spots Policing
Programs on Crime
and Disorder

Effects of Hot Spots Policing Programs on Crime and Disorder

Noteworthy crime reductions were reported in seven of the nine selected studies (see Table 2). A meta-analysis of hot spots policing experiments revealed significant overall prevention effects of hot spots policing programs in reducing citizen calls for service (Braga, 2005).² The strongest gains in crime control were reported in the Jersey City POP at Violent Places Study and the Kansas City Gun Project. In the Jersey City POP Study, the enforcement problem-oriented policing strategy resulted in significant reductions in total calls for service and total crime incidents, as well as varying reductions in all subcategories of crime types (Braga et al., 1999). Additional analyses of observation data collected over the course of the evaluation revealed that social disorder, such as loiterers and public drinkers, and physical disorder, such as trash, graffiti, and vacant lots, was also reduced significantly. Proactive patrols focused on firearm recoveries in the Kansas City Gun Project resulted in a 65 percent increase in gun seizures and a 49 percent decrease in gun crimes in the target beat area; gun seizures and gun crimes in the comparison beat area did not change significantly (Sherman and Rogan 1995a). A separate study examined community reaction to the Kansas City intervention and found that the community strongly supported the intensive patrols and perceived an improvement in the quality of life in the treatment neighborhood (Shaw, 1995).

The Minneapolis Hot Spots Patrol Program revealed that roughly doubling the level of patrol in crime hot spots resulted in modest, but significant, reductions in total calls for service, ranging from 6 percent to 13 percent (Sherman and Weisburd, 1995). Moreover, systematic observations of the hot spots documented that disorderly behavior in the targeted areas was also reduced (Sherman and Weisburd, 1995). The Jersey City DMAP Program found that well-planned crackdowns in street-level drug markets followed by patrol maintenance resulted in significant reductions in disorder calls for service (Weisburd and Green, 1995). Similarly, the St. Louis POP quasi-experiment found that the enforcement problem-oriented policing strategy was associated with varying degrees of reductions in total calls for service at all three high-activity drug locations; these reductions were greater than any reductions observed in other blocks and intersections in the surrounding areas (Hope, 1994). The Kansas City Crack House Raid experiment reported modest decreases in citizen calls for service and crime offenses at the targeted blocks that decayed within 2 weeks of the raids (Sherman and Rogan, 1995b).

²Meta-analysis is a technique used to investigate overall program effects associated with a selected set of studies (see Lipsey and Wilson, 2001).

The Houston Targeted Beat Program suggests that the aggregated target beats experienced significant reductions in auto theft, total Part I index crimes, and total Part I “patrol suppressible” crimes (robbery, burglary, and auto theft) (Caeti, 1999). The targeted beats where “zero tolerance” aggressive disorder policing was used to control hot spots experienced mixed reductions in Part I crimes; the three targeted beats where “high-visibility” directed patrol was used to control hot spots experienced reductions in a wide variety of Part I crimes; the one targeted beat where an enforcement problem-oriented policing strategy was implemented to control hot spots did not experience noteworthy decreases. The limits of the analytic framework used in this evaluation preclude conclusions that certain types of policing strategies may be more effective in preventing crime in hot spots (see Braga, 2001). Nevertheless, the results of this study can be broadly taken to support the position that focused police enforcement efforts can be effective in reducing crime at hot spots.

The evaluation of the Beenleigh Calls for Service Project found no noteworthy differences in the total number of calls in the town of Beenleigh relative to the matched town of Brown Plains (Criminal Justice Commission, 1998); however, simple comparisons found noteworthy reductions in total citizen calls for service in 16 of 19 case studies included in the report. The research team concluded that the problem-oriented policing strategy enjoyed some success in reducing calls for service at the targeted locations, but because of the small scale of the project and limitations of the research design, these crime-prevention gains were not large enough to be detected at the aggregate town level (Criminal Justice Commission, 1998).

The Minneapolis RECAP evaluation revealed no significant differences in the prevalence of citizen calls for service at addresses that received the problem-oriented policing treatment (Sherman, Buerger, and Gartin, 1989). These results were probably caused by methodological problems in the research design, such as the assignment of too many cases to the RECAP unit, thereby outstripping the amount of resources and attention the police officers provided to each address (Buerger, 1993). Although the overall findings suggest that the RECAP program was not effective in preventing crime, a case study analysis revealed that several addresses experienced dramatic reductions in total calls for service (Buerger, 1992).

Table 2: Results of Hot Spots Policing Evaluations.

Source: Adapted from Braga (2001).

Study	Crime Outcomes	Other Outcomes	Displacement / Diffusion
Minneapolis (MN) RECAP Sherman, Buerger, and Gartin (1989)	No effect.	None.	Not measured.
Minneapolis (MN) Hot Spots Sherman and Weisburd (1995)	Reductions in total citizen calls for service.	Observational data revealed reductions in crime and disorder.	Not measured.
Jersey City (NJ) DMAP Weisburd and Green (1995)	Reductions in citizen calls for disorder offenses.	None.	Little evidence of displacement; analyses suggest modest diffusion of crime-control benefits.
Jersey City (NJ) POP at Violent Places Braga et al. (1999)	Reductions in total calls for service and total crime incidents. All subcategories of crime experienced varying reductions.	Observational data revealed reductions in social and physical disorder.	Little evidence of immediate spatial displacement. Possible diffusion of crime-control benefits.
St. Louis (MO) POP in Three Drug Areas Hope (1994)	All three drug locations experienced varying reductions in total calls.	None.	One location experienced significant displacement.
Kansas City (MO) Crack House Raids Sherman and Rogan (1995a)	Modest decreases in citizen calls and offense reports that decayed in 2 weeks	None.	Not measured.
Kansas City (MO) Gun Project Sherman and Rogan (1995b)	Increase in number of guns seized by the police followed by decrease in gun crimes.	Community survey revealed favorable opinion of police efforts.	No significant crime displacement. Diffusion effects reported.
Houston (TX) Targeted Beat Program Caeti (1999)	Aggregated targeted beats experienced significant crime reductions. Specific beats reported mixed results.	None.	No evidence of displacement. Diffusion effects reported
Beenleigh (AUS) Calls for Service Project Criminal Justice Commission (1998)	No noteworthy differences in total number of calls between Beenleigh and Brown Plains areas. Noteworthy reductions in calls reported in majority of case studies.	None.	Not measured.

Displacement and Diffusion Effects

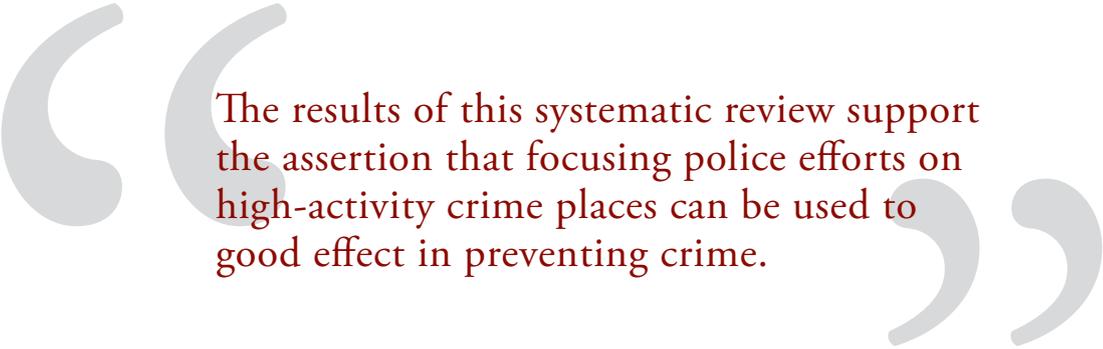
Five studies examined whether focused police efforts were associated with crime displacement or diffusion of crime-control benefits (see Table 2). Prior to a discussion of the research findings, it must be noted that it is very difficult to detect displacement effects because the potential manifestations of displacement are quite diverse. As Barr and Pease (1990) suggest, “if, in truth, displacement is complete, some displaced crime will fall outside the areas and types of crime being studied or be so dispersed as to be masked by background variation... no research study, however massive, is likely to resolve the issue.” Diffusion effects are likely to be as difficult to assess. All five studies were limited to examining immediate spatial displacement and diffusion effects; that is, whether focused police efforts in targeted areas resulted in crime “moving around the corner” or whether these surrounding areas experienced unintended crime-control benefits.

None of the five studies reported substantial immediate spatial displacement of crime into areas surrounding the targeted locations. Four studies suggested possible diffusion effects associated with the focused police interventions. The Jersey City POP at Violent Places experiment found little evidence of displacement in surrounding areas and reported significant decreases in total calls for service and disorder calls for service in surrounding areas. The Jersey City DMAP evaluation found significant decreases in public morals³ calls for service and narcotics calls for service in areas immediately surrounding the targeted drug hot spots. The Kansas City Gun Project evaluation examined whether gun crimes were displaced into seven beats contiguous to the target beat. None of the contiguous beats showed significant increases in gun crime and two of the contiguous beats reported significant decreases in gun crimes.

The Houston Targeted Beat quasi-experiment also examined displacement and diffusion effects by analyzing reported Part I index crimes in beats contiguous to the targeted beats. The analyses revealed no overall evidence of displacement and contiguous beats surrounding three targeted beats (one problem-oriented policing beat and two zero-tolerance beats) experienced possible diffusion effects as several types of reported Index crimes decreased notably. The St. Louis POP at Drug Locations quasi-experiment assessed displacement effects by comparing trends in calls for service at targeted addresses to nontargeted addresses on

³“Public morals” calls for service represented a subcategory of disorder calls for service in the Jersey City DMAP evaluation. According to Weisburd and Green (1995), public morals calls for service included citizen reports of gambling, lewdness, possession of liquor, and prostitution.

the same block. Significant increases in calls for service at nontargeted addresses on the same block were reported in only one of the three analyses. The primary cause of the observed displacement was a shift in drug sales from a targeted apartment building to a similar nontargeted apartment building on the same block.



The results of this systematic review support the assertion that focusing police efforts on high-activity crime places can be used to good effect in preventing crime.



Conclusion and Policy
Implications

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The results of this systematic review support the assertion that focusing police efforts on high-activity crime places can be used to good effect in preventing crime. Seven of the nine evaluations reported noteworthy reductions in crime and disorder. Problems in the research and evaluation design probably accounted for the lack of crime-prevention gains in the Minneapolis RECAP experiment. This review also supports the growing body of research evidence that suggests that focused crime-prevention efforts do not inevitably lead to the displacement of crime problems (Clarke and Weisburd 1994; Hesselting 1994; Eck 1993); rather, when displacement was measured, it was quite limited and often unintended crime-prevention benefits were associated with the hot spots policing programs. While only five studies examined potential displacement and diffusion effects, none of these evaluations reported substantial immediate spatial displacement of crime into areas surrounding the targeted locations. The National Research Council's Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practices examined the results of an earlier and more detailed version of this review (Braga, 2001) and concluded that there was "strong empirical support for the hot spots policing approach" to crime prevention (Skogan and Frydl, 2004: 240).

While the available evidence supports the assertion that hot spots policing is effective, there are important gaps in our knowledge about it. Clearly, the enforcement-oriented strategies reviewed here work in preventing crime. We do not know, however, which enforcement strategies are more effective in preventing crime and under what circumstances certain strategies are more appropriate. For instance, we do not know whether many of the observed crime-control gains were generated by increased arrests, increased contacts with potential offenders, or simply increased police presence in very small areas. This small body of evaluation research also does not unravel the important question of whether enforcement-oriented programs result in long-term crime reductions in hot spot areas. Comparison periods to detect potential crime-prevention effects ranged from only 1 month (Sherman and Rogan, 1995b) to 1 year (Sherman and Weisburd, 1995).

This review also offers little insight into the effectiveness of enforcement tactics relative to other broader-based community problem-solving policing programs (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). Research suggests that a variety of situational factors causes crime to cluster at

particular places (Eck and Weisburd, 1995). Proactive patrols, raids, and crackdowns specifically do not address the site features (such as easy access, lack of capable guardians, inept or improper place management, and the presence of value items) and facilities (such as the presence of abandoned buildings and bars) that cause specific locations to generate high volumes of crime. With the exception of the problem-oriented policing programs with limited situational interventions, the place-oriented interventions in this review consisted of uniform tactics applied across varied places. Perhaps a greater focus on changing the conditions that cause crime to cluster might result in longer lasting crime reductions in hot spot areas.

The recent National Research Council review of police policy and practices also suggests that the most generalized strategies—for example, preventive patrol and drug raids—are likely to have less impact than approaches that include more focused problem-solving elements, such as working with landlords, local business owners, and residents (Skogan and Frydl, 2004). Our understanding of the effects of hot spots policing, however, remains very general. If we are to maximize the crime-prevention effects of hot spots approaches we need to examine carefully the interaction of different strategies with different hot spots settings. This effort would demand a large group of studies, but given the promise of hot spots policing, such an investment in research in this area seems appropriate. Future studies should examine the monetary costs associated with implementing these programs. In the studies reviewed here, very little attention was paid to issues such as staffing, overtime costs, and other related expenditures.⁴

Also, too little attention has been paid to the potential harmful effects of hot spots approaches. Police effectiveness studies traditionally have overlooked the effects of policing practices on citizen perceptions of police legitimacy (Tyler, 2000; Tyler, 2001). Does the concentration of police enforcement in specific hot spots lead citizens to question the fairness of police practices? There is some evidence that residents of areas that are subject to hot spots policing welcome the concentration of police efforts in problem places (Shaw, 1995); however, focused aggressive police enforcement strategies have been criticized as resulting in increased citizen complaints about police misconduct and abuse of force in New York City (Greene, 1999). Citizen appraisals of police legitimacy are greatly influenced by whether community members perceive that they were treated fairly and with respect and

⁴For instance, in the Kansas City Gun Study, the evaluators note that the intervention was funded by a U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance Weed and Seed grant to the Kansas City (Missouri) Police Department (Sherman and Rogan, 1995a). While the evaluation notes that the program budget paid for police overtime and extra patrol cars in the targeted areas, there is no discussion of specific dollar amounts or the cost-effectiveness of the approach.

dignity by police officers (Tyler, 2000; Tyler, 2001). As in the case of understanding the effectiveness of police strategies, the potential effects of hot spots policing on legitimacy may depend in good part on the types of strategies used and the context of the hot spots affected. But whatever the effects, we need to know more about the effects of hot spots policing approaches on the communities that the police serve. Police executives considering enforcement-oriented hot spots policing initiatives should engage the community in the development of the program and train officers in fair and respectful policing techniques.

Finally, the research overall strongly supports the position that hot spots policing can have a meaningful effect on crime without simply displacing crime-control benefits to areas nearby. However, a recent study, which reinforces the findings that there is little immediate spatial displacement of crime as a result of hot spots policing approaches, identifies other displacement outcomes that may occur in focused policing efforts (Weisburd et al., 2006). Offenders interviewed in the study described factors that inhibited spatial displacement, including the importance of familiar territory to offenders and the social organization of illicit activities at hot spots that often precluded easy movement to other areas that offer opportunities for crime. Prostitutes, for example, were found to work near their homes, and described being uncomfortable in moving to other areas where different kinds of people worked and different kinds of clients were found. Prostitutes and drug dealers in the study described the importance of the familiarity of a place to their clients, and some offenders talked of the dangers of encroaching on the territories of offenders in other hot spots.

Overall, a number of factors seemed to discourage spatial displacement in the study. Nonetheless, Weisburd et al. (2006) find that offenders will often try other modes of adaptation to police interventions, the most common being a change in methods of committing illegal acts. Prostitutes and drug dealers, for example, may begin to make “appointments” with their customers, or move their activities indoors to avoid heightened police activities on the street. While the net gain in crime prevention may still be large for hot spots efforts, these findings suggest the importance of continued investigation of possible nonspatial displacement (e.g., method displacement) outcomes in hot spots policing.

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