

# Problem Solving Quarterly

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## The Threat of Crime Displacement

By John Eck

As police and sheriff's officers undertake problem-solving projects, police have become increasingly concerned that these efforts may simply move crime around without reducing offenses. The shifting of crime in response to a prevention or enforcement campaign is called crime **displacement**.

If **suppressing** crime in one **neighborhood** results in an equal increase in crime in a nearby **community**, the net effect of the crime control effort is zero-only the victims **have changed**. In this pessimistic scenario, displacement is 100 percent. It is theoretically possible to have displacement greater than 100 percent, if crime prevention in the target area results in an increase in crime in a nearby area greater than the reduction of crime in the target area. Displacement can also be less than

100 percent-the increase in crime in the nearby area is less than the reduction of crime in the target area. Or there may be no displacement at all.

Despite the concern about displacement, police seldom have good evidence of displacement. Because of this concern and lack of empirical evidence, I recently researched this subject. I identified 33 studies from seven countries on three continents where the researcher looked for evidence of displacement while evaluating the effectiveness of a crime prevention or enforcement initiative. I discovered cops should not be so pessimistic about displacement.

- No study cited a crime prevention effort or enforcement program that resulted in more than 100 percent displacement.
- One hundred percent displacement can occur but is very rare.
- Many evaluations found evidence of some

displacement less than 100 percent.

- More than half of the studies found no evidence of displacement.

In general, little or no displacement is the most likely outcome. Yet there can be no guarantee that this will be the result, and the actual program impact will depend on the specific problem addressed, the proposed intervention, and the circumstances surrounding the problem and intervention. Still, displacement should not be used as an excuse for not undertaking problem-solving efforts, crime prevention projects or enforcement programs.

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## What Is Displacement?

Displacement is not simply the geographic movement of crime. It involves a variety of behavioral changes resulting from the **blocking** of criminal opportunities. Specifically, six forms of displacement are possible:

- **Temporal** - offenders change the time when they commit crimes (for example, from days to nights);
- **Spatial** - offenders switch from targets in one location to targets in another location (for example, a burglar stops offending in one neighborhood and begins offending in an adjacent community);
- **Target** - offenders switch from one type of target to another type (for example, a burglar switches from apartment units to single-family detached homes);
- **Method** - offenders change the way they **attack** targets (for example, a street robber stops using a knife and uses a gun);
- **Crime Type** - offenders switch from one form of crime to another (for example, from **burglary** to check **fraud**); and
- **Perpetrator** - new offenders replace old offenders who have been removed by police enforcement (for example, following the arrest of a

**source of stolen goods, a fence recruits a new thief to keep him supplied).**

Many studies do not look for displacement effects and when they do, they seldom look for all six types. Therefore, displacement could be more common, or less common, than studies suggest.

A small number of studies show a diffusion of benefits **rather than displacement. That is,** the intervention not only reduced crime for the specific target population, but reduced crime beyond the targets. The number of such studies are small, but might be much more widespread since few researchers have looked for such effects.

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## More than half of the studies found no evidence of displacement.

### Why Expect Displacement?

Different theories of crime suggest different outcomes relative to displacement. If people are driven to crime because of socio-economic factors, displacement is inevitable. If people choose whether or not to commit a crime, displacement is only a possibility. Since the evidence for 100 percent displacement is weak, there is more reason to believe that people choose to participate in crime than to believe that they are driven to crime.

### When to Expect Displacement

Displacement may not be inevitable, but it is a possibility.

Police and sheriffs' officials should consider the circumstances under which displacement is most likely so **that they can plan** their interventions to minimize that possibility.

If offenders can easily change behaviors to circumvent the intervention, displacement is more likely than if they must make dramatic changes in their behaviors. Responses to unique problems are less likely to be threatened by **displacement than** responses to common problems, if the reason for the uniqueness is taken into account in the intervention. For example, one is more likely to be **successful in preventing burglaries in a specific apartment complex than burglaries in general.**

Police practitioners **who want to avoid displacement** problems need to **analyze** the specific nature of problems to learn how offenders take **advantage** of situations. Using generic, off-the-shelf **interventions** is more likely to result in **displacement because such programs will not be able to take into account the decisionmaking** of the offenders involved.

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**John Eck is associate director for research at PERF. His entire study is published in the September 1993 issue of Criminal Justice Abstracts.**

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# Leading the Change: A Square Peg Can't Fit in a Round Hole

By Richard P. Thomas

To effectively implement **problem-oriented policing (POP)**, a **department must consider** how its **organizational structure** will encourage **smooth functioning of this application**. This was the situation my department had to face when the Beloit (WI) Police Department introduced POP in the winter of 1988.

At first, a limited number of command, mid-level and patrol officers received training to experiment with POP. The officers dealt with juvenile **delinquency** problems at trailer parks, **vandalism at a neighborhood vending company and unsafe traffic patterns near a school**. The city **manager and** other city administrators learned about the **POP philosophy and** the local media periodically reported about the work of POP officers. The department **highlighted** the results of their efforts **and** encouraged more officers to use the problem-solving process.

Supervisors and managers had high expectations. They created a specific problem-solving category on performance appraisal forms to hold accountable employees, including patrol and first-line supervisors, for working within the POP framework. *Officers who achieved significant results* received annual awards and promotions.

By the end of the first year, the department was satisfied with the results of POP. However, from 1989-1990, trying to expand POP caused **frustration** in the agency. Despite all of the interdepartmental recognition, community support and publicity, officers were not **enthusiastically applying POP** as anticipated. They often did not **use POP on a daily basis** for review and follow-up.

According to managers, the biggest obstacles came from how officers were assigned to their beats. Shifts operated by time of day, which did not allow for effective coordination because officers were assigned to randomly patrol areas. This was confusing to citizens and limited opportunities for officers and community members to communicate daily. Also, there was no consistency of patrol expectations between shifts; each shift **had** its own management objectives **and** differed according to the patrol boundaries. As a result, we were asking our officers to work within the framework of POP, a contemporary method of police work, while continuing in a traditional structure.

## POP : A 1990s Process

Our police department, like other agencies throughout the United States, was "traditional," not only in the way we did our work, but in how we organized our personnel and equipment. Following a department management retreat, we committed to managing the department using a 1990s process not a 1960s one. The department planned changes in its infrastructure to accelerate officers' daily use of POP. These changes could ac-

commodate the **non-traditional** responses we wanted our officers to develop to meet the needs of the community and, specifically, the unique and personal needs of various neighborhoods. Adopting the community policing philosophy, while applying POP, would also further our use of POP. These changes also kept us in **partnership** with the community as we both progressed, since our success would depend on our **ability to analyze and proactively** use information received **and** developed from the community.

The department developed a **new patrol structure to accomplish the following goals:**

- **Develop area responsibility and beat integrity through POP for officers to work with their patrol neighborhood as advocates;**
- **Encourage** officers to **systematically** use POP in their work;
- **Enhance communication** among patrol officers;
- Promote community/police networking; **and**
- Create a community-integrated police system.

The department removed the **commanding officer of each patrol shift** to flatten the patrol hierarchy. Two of the commanding officers were assigned to each side of the city. These changes increased the visibility **and communications** of **commanding officers and facilitated** a more consistent delivery of police services within **the community**.

**New patrol boundaries for eight defined neighborhoods**

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Beloit Police Officer Mardi\* Farr examines litter in a vacant home as part of a neighborhood POP effort to clean up houses used for illegal activities.

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were based on the demographics and needs of the neighborhoods. The boundaries remained the same regardless of shift. This measure helped structure deployment so officers could police the city by neighborhood, rather than time of day. Each shift had three work groups aligned with each other to work the same sides of the city, which created vertical communication among officers working together as POP teams assigned to neighborhoods.

The length of assignments to these neighborhoods expanded to 90 days. The vertical patrol teams now rotate together from one neighborhood to another upon completing their assignments. Currently, the department is studying this deployment and considering expanding the assignments to one year because officers want to be assigned for even longer periods.

Department equipment, such as radios, squad cars and tactical gear, have been upgraded since 1991. These are just a few of the changes within the department in-

frastructure, that were needed to accommodate the officers using problem-solving police methods.

## Effective Outcomes of POP

As a result, officers are engaged in POP in a much more intimate and professional way. The number of officers who use POP as a part of their day-to-day work has increased. Officers have developed a strong camaraderie with the community to prevent crime in the city and have experienced a deeper sense of citizen appreciation and participation.

Barb King, president of Citizens for a Better Community-West, said, "[Our group] is trying to improve their neighborhood, and have found the Beloit Police Department very helpful in working together to monitor and resolve problems in our community by using problem-oriented policing strategies."

She continued, "Our joint efforts have resulted in the refusal of several liquor licenses [to stores] which were causing prob-

lems with litter, loitering, noise, etc. We have seen definite improvement in our neighborhood and will continue to work with the police department in building a stronger, safer and better community."

Also, as a result of instituting POP, officers more readily see their immediate sergeant as a group leader, facilitator, coach, mentor and advisor.

Sgt. Norman Jacobs said, "One of the main strengths of the department infrastructure we now have is the predictability citizens can expect from beat officers. With officers no longer going in and out of an area faster than the troublemakers, citizens can come to expect or demand consistent enforcement and actions from the officer. This predictability is beneficial to a supervisor who must evaluate an officer's motivation to solve on-going problems.

"The ability of an officer to overcome a long-term problem by sticking with it will reflect his or her overall motivation for serving the public. With this belief, officers should be in their beats for longer periods of time and the old complaints for moving around the city should be thrown out with the traditional model of policing."

Thus, in order to implement POP into an agency, a police department's infrastructure and design must be carefully evaluated and appropriately changed to further the effectiveness and expected outcomes of this new way of thinking and conducting police work.

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**Deputy Chief Richard Thomas is director of law enforcement operations for the Beloit (WI) Police Department.**

# Homeless Men Help Stop Burglaries

By Larry Murphy

Tempe, Arizona-One afternoon on patrol, I was dispatched to Shurguard Storage regarding a burglary. While at the scene, I contacted the manager Bob Naugle. The storage facility had over 128 units and coded gates that allowed 24-hour access to the complex. Naugle advised me that the complex had no security between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. An attendant only worked part time at this location.

Burglaries had been historically high at Shurguard Storage. There were 18 burglaries throughout 1992. For several months, the police department received the majority of its calls for burglaries from this facility. Rock bands practiced in different units at night and a lot of their music equipment and personal items from other units were stolen. In the past, the department had taken reports about incidents and put extra patrols in the area; but these measures had no effect on the problem. Due to a recent rash of thefts and burglaries, I advised Naugle that the complex needed full-time security.

Talking with Naugle, I also learned that some of the storage units had electricity. I suggested he employ a transient person and supply a heater and bed in a unit so a person could live there comfortably. I learned that transients are territorial and will protect their area from other transients. Naugle said he would check with his district manager about the suggestion.

The next day Naugle said his manager approved of housing someone in the complex at night. As I was leaving the complex, I saw Cowboy, a transient who had lived in my beat area for the past five years. Cowboy was living outside near Hudson Park. I asked him if he'd be interested in living inside a storage unit in exchange for making periodic checks of the complex. Cowboy agreed and said his friend Sparky was also interested.

## Burglaries had been historically high at Shurguard Storage.

I introduced Cowboy and Sparky to Naugle the next morning. Several days later, I contacted Naugle, who reported the two men had spent the previous nights at the complex. Cowboy and Sparky each monitored one end of the storage facility. Naugle was happy with their performance. He also implemented new policies of closing at 10:00 p.m. and not giving rock bands access to the facility.

This arrangement successfully reduced thefts and burglaries at the storage complex. All of the units are fully occupied, which had not been the case previously. Since the new measures, there has been only one attempted burglary. Cowboy is also doing light maintenance for Shurguard now and has another job with a Shurguard tenant. Shurguard is even considering using transients for security at their other facilities across the country.

Larry Murphy is a patrol officer for the Tempe (AZ) Police Department.

## Submissions

When submitting descriptions of problem-solving efforts to PSQ, remember to consider the following questions:

- What is the problem?
- For whom is it a problem?
- Who is affected by the problem, and how: are they affected?
- How has the department handled the problem in the past?
- What information was collected about the problem?
- Were there any difficulties in getting the information?
- What was the goal of the problem-solving effort?
- What strategies were developed to reach that goal?
- What agencies assisted the police department in achieving the goal?
- Was the goal accomplished?
- What would you recommend to other police agencies interested in addressing similar problems?

Send submissions to:  
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2300 M Street NW, Suite 910  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 466-7820  
FAX (202) 466-7826

## Workshops Highlight 1993 POP Conference

PERF and the San Diego Police Department are making final preparations for the eagerly anticipated Fourth Annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference, which will be held in San Diego, California, from Nov. 3-5, 1993. This unique conference brings together police practitioners from across North America to discuss issues and lead workshops on successful problem-solving efforts.

The conference will feature over 30 interactive *workshops* and presentations designed to facilitate the exchange of information **to** police agencies that have implemented this innovative approach to policing or are interested in moving towards a POP approach. The conference will include:

- A primer on Nov 2 for participants who may have little knowledge of POP;

- A discussion workshop for police leaders to address key leadership issues related to implementing POP; and
- A series of implementation workshops that focus on topics such as overcoming resistance, supervising officers, developing training curricula and strategic planning.

The conference will be held at the San Diego Marriott Hotel; participants can call I-800-428-9290 for reservations and secure special hotel rates for conference attendees. To register for the conference, send \$295 to PBREF, POP Conference, 2300M Street NW, Suite 910, Washington, DC 20037.

For additional information, please call Jennifer Nreka at (202) 466-78\*

## PERF Offers

### Problem-Oriented Policing Training

PERF provides POP training for command staff, **mid-management**, first-line supervisors and field officers. The training can be specially **designed** to meet your **department's** needs. The basic **training program** covers:

- The evolution of problem-oriented policing
- The **problem-solving** process
- Examples and case studies in problem solving
- Implementing problem solving in your **department**

PERF trainers use a **wide range of training tools** including lectures, videos and interactive workshops. The workshops allow participants a chance to apply the problem-solving process to the kinds of crime problems their agencies experience.

If your **agency** is interested in obtaining POP training, please contact **Susie Mowry** at (202) 466-7820.

## POP in Your Neighborhood

To help POP departments across the country communicate better with **each other**, PSQ is featuring the final installment of its series on agencies that have participated in PERF's POP training. The following is a partial listing of agencies from the southwestern states that have trained with PERF in POP:

### Arizona

- Tempe Police Dept.

### California

- San Diego Police Dept.
- Santa Monica Police Dept.
- Turlock Police Dept.

### Colorado

- Arvada Police Dept.
- Lakewood Police Dept.

### Nevada

- Reno Police Dept.

# PSQ Readers Reply

## **Question: Has problem-oriented policing changed your way of supervising?**

Answer: There is more interaction between myself **and** the other members of my unit. Before POP, my job was to direct what my people did. Now it is working together to accomplish common goals. We come up with different responses **and** better ways to **deal** with **problems**. My role is more of a coach; in fact, I've become both a coach **and** a player. The more **traditional** style of supervision **didn't** leave me **any room** to get involved in solving problems. **I didn't** work with the officers on the street, they worked for me.

Under this **POP** style of policing **and** participatory style of supervision, the officers are more involved in the **decision-making** process. Whether it was right, wrong or indifferent, before POP, the supervisor was always expected to come up with the ideas.

The people who are working with me are very bright **and** creative. It's much more effective for me to use their creativity to solve long-term problems. The more involved the entire unit is, the greater the chance of our success.

—Sgt. Duke Shockley, Newport News (VA) Police Department

**Answer: It's a** much more difficult role now. The **traditional** style of policing was very easy. It was very **reactionary and** your job was to keep your officers in line. You were to make sure to follow the rules. Many departments felt that if you didn't find someone doing something wrong then you weren't doing your job.

The role of the supervisor under POP is much more relaxed. It's about building consensus among the troops **and** the community, and deciding who to involve in the solutions to problems. Under traditional policing, the sergeants didn't get too close to the troops because the belief was that you wouldn't be able to supervise them.

Using POP, you and your colleagues build a bond by supporting each other to do their jobs. This bond

becomes a critical factor and, in my opinion, makes officers less apt to participate in bad behavior.

My job now involves more planning, both long-term and short-term planning. I need to actively involve my officers in the planning. I have to have a vision that the troops must know about so they know where they are going. I have to have good listening skills and be able to team build.

—Sgt. Dominic Liraviali, Los Angeles Police Department

**Answer: Yes, my style of supervision has changed. POP has made it more of a team effort. In the past, you would have approached it as an individual effort. Now we give commendations for team efforts, rather than to individual officers. This type of supervision is more participatory.**

I've seen supervisors become much more open to suggestions and seem to brainstorm more frequently. It really takes the stress off **a supervisor by getting input** from other sources, rather **than needing to think** of everything on your own. Before POP, it seemed that the sergeants were just held in reserve for the **big things**, like **hostage** situations. Now you can get involved in **an on-going** basis. A supervisor **can, and** should, be actively involved in the **day-to-day** operation on the street.

—Sgt. Brian Bugge, Suffolk County (NY) Police Department

*The neat PSQ Readers Reply will focus on the following question:*

**How do you discourage negative peer pressure against officers who participate in problem-solving activities?**

*We 71 print the most interesting responses in the Fall 1993 issue of PSQ so please fax them to PERF at (202) 466-7826 as soon as possible.*