

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2013

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Bill Geller, project strategist Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

Five Police Departments Building Trust and Collaboration

Innovations in Policing Clinic
Yale Law School
High Point, North Carolina

Short Version of the Case

by
Trevor Stutz



Short Version of the Case

Trust and Collaboration in High Point, North Carolina¹

Trevor Stutz, in collaboration with members of Yale Law School's Innovations in Policing Clinic

Introduction

In the mid-1990s High Point, North Carolina, was plagued by high violent crime rates. In response, incoming police chief Louis F. Quijas adopted a strategy of focused deterrence. As defined by criminologist David Kennedy of the John Jay College for Criminal Justice, focused deterrence is a crime reduction strategy that “put[s] identified offenders on notice that their community wants them to stop, that help is available and that particular criminal actions will bring heightened law enforcement attention.”²

To enact this approach, police collaborate with other justice system actors and community leaders to identify those most likely to commit violent crimes and deter those offenders and potential offenders. They use targeted communications, face-to-face meetings, and, essentially, a warning system.

Focused deterrence replaces broad drug sweeps and other policing strategies that indiscriminately net large numbers of low-level offenders. Such targeted tactics also reflect a response to the feelings of residents of neighborhoods targeted by sweeps who feel the police interventions are frequently arbitrary and discriminatory. Individual police interventions focused on known offenders do not evoke the same concerns on the part of the community.

When effective, as in High Point, focused deterrence strategies prevent crime. Focused deterrence programs also increase communication among police officers, community members, and offenders. The result is increased police transparency, credibility, and legitimacy. In particular, when police collaborate with and express trust in communities, those communities then feel empowered to self-police and aid law enforcement.

Focused deterrence is being implemented and incorporated in various forms across the United States. For example, the U.S. Department of Justice, through Michigan State University (MSU),³ has implemented the “High Point Model” for ending open-air drug markets across more than 25 jurisdictions since 2007.

¹ The information contained in this case study is based on more than 20 interviews, a three-day site visit, and available secondary research. Where not directly cited, the claims are the author's observations from these collected materials and experiences.

² David Kennedy, *Drugs, Race and Common Ground: Reflections on the High Point Intervention*, 262 *National Institute of Justice Journal* 12, 12 (2009).

³ MSU has created a website that guides police leaders through the steps of implementing DMIs: <http://dmimsu.com>, which also provides additional resources and interviews from High Point.

Background on High Point

High Point, NC, a city of 104,000,⁴ is the smallest city in North Carolina's Piedmont Triad, which includes Winston-Salem and Greensboro. The population is 54 percent white, 33 percent African-American, and 8.5 percent Latino.⁵ The median income per household is \$43,594, just below the North Carolina average,⁶ and \$8,000 below the national average.⁷ Nearly a fifth of High Point residents live below the federal poverty line, compared to 15.5 percent of North Carolinians⁸ and 13.8 percent of all Americans.⁹

From 1985 to 1994, High Point experienced a dramatic doubling in the violent crime rate.¹⁰ The crime increase was felt particularly in low-income neighborhoods. By the mid-1990s, multiple small neighborhood associations were meeting, outraged by the climbing violence in the city. Several high-profile incidents exacerbated tensions between the police department in the community. Most notably, a young man sitting innocently on a parked car after a big high school football game was accidentally shot and killed—an event known as “Five Points.”¹¹ His death galvanized members of the community.

After Five Points, newly appointed Chief Louis F. Quijas began convening regular meetings with community groups. Chief Quijas involved representatives from the probation department and government agencies such as the Department of Social Services in discussions with neighborhood associations, a black-on-black crime group, and victims' advocates.

Around the same time, several High Point Police Department (HPPD) officers went to Winston-Salem to hear Professor David Kennedy of the John Jay College for Criminal Justice talk about Operation Ceasefire, which successfully reduced the homicide rate in Boston a few years earlier. The officers proposed trying a Ceasefire-like model in High Point. A number of community members met with Kennedy and agreed to support and participate in focused deterrence efforts.

These community members organized monthly meetings beginning in 1997 that led to the creation of High Point Community Against Violence (HPCAV). HPCAV is governed by a board of 17 directors who represent a broad cross-section of the community, from former police officers to probation officers to victims' advocates and a youth center director.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 U.S. Census, State & County QuickFacts, High Point, North Carolina, available: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/3731400.html>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 U.S. Census, State & County QuickFacts, United States of America, available at: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>.

⁸ Census QuickFacts, High Point, North Carolina, *supra* note 8.

⁹ Census QuickFacts, United States of America, *supra* note 11.

¹⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics, UCR Data Online, *available*: <http://www.ucrdatatool.gov/Search/Crime/Local/RunCrimeTrendsInOneVar.cfm> (showing the per 100,000 resident rates of violent crime climbing from 735.9 in 1985 to a high of 1,433.6 in 1994). The North Carolina and national rates increased only moderately over the same time, while some other regional cities experienced dramatic increases on par with High Point, e.g. Durham. *Id.*

¹¹ It is not entirely clear why this shooting death incident spurred a greater reaction than previous murders. Community leaders indicated that this shooting was different because the victim was widely seen as a mere “innocent” bystander, rather than someone who was otherwise involved in crime or stigmatized.

Although the group did not incorporate as a 501(c)(3) non-profit until 2004 and did not hire a paid Executive Director or have formal office space until 2009, it has had regular monthly meetings with the police and multiple stakeholders for 14 years.

High Point’s Focused Deterrence Strategy

Since 1998 HPPD has worked closely with HPCAV to reduce violent crime. The strength of the partnership is unique and benefits both the department and High Point communities. From 1997 to 2010, violent crimes fell from 1,646 to 582 per 100,000 people, vastly outstripping the decrease experienced across the nation.¹² The police have achieved this result through a strategy of “focused deterrence.”

High Point’s adoption of focused deterrence strategies grew directly out of Boston’s 1996 Operation Ceasefire, which “combined problem-oriented policing with collaboration between law enforcement organizations and community stakeholders.”¹³ Although Ceasefire was developed to address gang violence, High Point has used elements of the model targeting face-to-face meetings with police, community members, and offenders to target other offenses as well.

HPPD has used focused deterrence strategies to target several distinct types of criminal activity. The department selected each intervention based on its identification of which activities led to the given type of crime.¹⁴ The department began with a focus on repeat violent offenders in 1997; tackled open-air drug markets in 2004; worked on reducing

¹² HPPD, High Point Indexed Violent Crime: Per 100,000 (on file with author). “Violent Crime” includes murder, rape, robbery and assault, the same categories labeled as “violent” by the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports. According to HPPD’s internal data, High Point experienced reductions in overall violent crime per 100,000 from 1997 to 2010 of 64.6% when factoring in the contemporaneous population growth, including absolute reductions in: murders from 20 to 4 (85.1% decrease per 100,000 persons), rape from 50 to 31 (53.8% decrease per 100,000 persons), robbery from 457 to 208 (66.1% decrease per 100,000 persons), and assault from 724 to 352 (63.8% decrease per 100,000 persons).

According to the UCR, High Point experienced an absolute decrease in violent crime from 949 violent crimes in 1997 to 678 in 2009 (a 47.7% decrease per 100,000 residents), including decreases in murder from 12 to 3 (81.6% decrease per 100,000 residents), rape from 38 to 33 (36.5% decrease per 100,000 residents), robbery from 348 to 273 (42.6% decrease per 100,000 residents), and assault from 551 to 369 (51.0% decrease per 100,000 residents). As noted, these numbers still outpace the decline in violent crime in North Carolina and nationally. In 1997, North Carolina reported per 100,000 residents: 607 violent crimes including 8.3 murders, 31.6 rapes, 172.6 robberies, 394.5 assaults; and by 2009 those numbers had declined to 404.3 total (33.4% decrease), 5.3 murders (36.1% decrease), 24.6 rapes (22.2% decrease), 126.1 robberies (26.9% decrease) and 248.4 assaults (26.9% decrease). The national data shows 1997 levels per 100,000 residents: 611 violent crimes including 6.8 murders, 35.9 rapes, 186.2 robberies, 382.1 assaults; and by 2009 those numbers had declined to 429.4 total (29.7% decrease), 5.0 murders (26.5% decrease), 28.7 rapes (20.1% decrease), 133.0 robberies (28.6% decrease), and 262.8 assaults (31.2% decrease). The few HPPD detractors with whom I spoke pointed out that violent crime has fallen across the United States during this time period and thus no credit could be given to HPPD in reducing crime. This criticism appears weak given the above data.

¹³ *Id.* at 13.

¹⁴ HPPD’s crime analyst, Dr. Lee Hunt, is primarily responsible for identifying what is “driving” violent crime. While Dr. Hunt has developed models for HPPD to detect real-time spikes in particular categories and geographies of crime, he also claims that smaller departments without sophisticated technology can identify problem areas producing violent crime through routine analysis of the various pieces of information captured by police departments.

youth gang activity in 2008; and have begun focusing on domestic violence this year.¹⁵ Its work in 2004 focusing on open-air drug markets, now known as the “High Point model” or “Drug Market Intervention Initiative,” notably introduced a new tactic within focused deterrence, what Kennedy calls “the unprecedented— and initially terrifying — element of truth-telling about racial conflict.”¹⁶

For its initial efforts, focused on violent crime, HPPD reviewed its crime data and incident reports and determined that a handful of repeat offenders were driving a disproportionate amount of violent crime.¹⁷ The Violent Crimes Task Force (VCTF) identified a few dozen offenders to target, many with outstanding serious charges pending, almost all of them on probation for previous violent crimes.¹⁸ In early morning hours, HPPD, federal officers, and probation officers would sweep up offenders with pending violent charges. The remaining two dozen or so on probation were “called in” and given a “second-chance” message.

In these face-to-face meetings, law enforcement and community leaders credibly communicated to repeat offenders that they would receive special attention from law enforcement, that the community needed the violence to stop, and that social services were available for those who wanted them. More than 900 offenders have gone through this process over the last 14 years—about 12 every three months.

Lessons from High Point

The success of the High Point focused deterrence strategy and approach to collaboration with the community are instructive—as are past and continued challenges to changing mindsets and ensuring the permanence of these innovations.

What sets High Point apart from other cities that have implemented focused deterrence strategies is at least three-fold: (1) HPPD has been pursuing focused deterrence for more than 14 years across three chiefs of police; (2) HPPD has had a very active community partner in High Point Community Against Violence (HPCAV); and (3) HPPD has engaged in frank dialogue about racial conflict.

HPPD’s leadership was key to the department’s sustained shift to focused deterrence and its ongoing relationship with HPCAV. Recently retired Chief Jim Fealy and former Chief Louis Quijas, along with an assortment of colleagues, fundamentally changed HPPD’s policing strategy and relationship with the community. Similarly, on the community side, a handful of long-time community leaders have steered HPCAV for more than a decade.

¹⁵ While High Point has become best known for the “Drug Market Intervention” (DMI) strategy piloted there in 2004, the department and community members with whom the author spoke attribute the sustained drop in violent crime across High Point not just to the five overt drug markets targeted by DMIs, but to the 14 years of ongoing community-police collaboration and the focused deterrence thinking that HPPD leaders have increasingly incorporated into department organization.

¹⁶ David Kennedy, *Drugs, Race and Common Ground: Reflections on the High Point Intervention*, 262 National Institute of Justice Journal 12, 12 (2009).

¹⁷ This review process happens largely independently of the community. HPPD does use the information gathered from community members to help understand given offenders situations, but no one has ever indicated that the community weighs in on which offenders are selected as “repeat violent offenders.”

¹⁸ Interview with Rob Martin, December 7, 2011, High Point, N.C.

Despite notable successes in reducing crime and building relationships between police and community leaders, particularly in low-income African-American neighborhoods, both the focused deterrence model and collaboration with HPCAV remain fragile. This progress could disappear without the “right” leaders in key positions. It is important to note that HPPD recently transitioned from Chief Jim Fealy to Chief Marty Sumner, who has had a long relationship with HPCAV and understands and believes in furthering the focused deterrence strategy.¹⁹

Yet it is uncertain who would step into the breach in the absence of key HPPD and HPCAV leaders. The majority of HPPD line officers are unconvinced by the focused deterrence model and it is unclear if the focused deterrence strategy is replacing or simply being layered on top of *unfocused* policing—the types of daily policing tactics that have led to fractious community-police relationships in the past. Likewise, it is an open question whether other community members could assume HPCAV leadership roles. Much of HPPD-HPCAV collaboration, and the trust of stakeholders within the police and the broader coalition, has been founded on personal relationships.

Recommendations:

1. Building Community Trust & Collaboration

- Police leaders must meet regularly with community representatives
- Decision-makers need to be in the room, not representatives who can’t make decisions
- Having a facilitator helps
- The involvement of police leadership in meetings and within the community is key
- Building community relations means addressing historical rifts
- A good way to get community buy-in is to ask them to approve policies beforehand
- The U.S. Attorney’s Office can be important partner because of the power to convene law enforcement entities, bring funding, and provide political support

2. Valuing Community Trust & Collaboration

- The police cannot be the “moral voice” – the community must be the morality enforcer.
- Police transparency generates legitimacy with the community
- Police transparency also helps counter political tampering
- Having the community relationship is important to weathering crisis
- When people feel supported by police, they’re more willing to assist police

¹⁹ See Pat Kimbrough, *Police Expect Smooth Transition After Chief Fealy Retires*, THE HIGH POINT ENTERPRISE, Jan. 4, 2012, available at http://hpe.com/view/full_story/16948124/article-Police-expect-smooth-transition-after-Chief-Fealy-retires.

3. Sustaining Community Trust & Collaboration

- The success of community-police partnership & the longevity of community organization are greatly enhanced by focusing the mission on a clear objective
- Hold police officers accountable and tell the truth in the wake of police misconduct
- Personal relationships are important at every stage
- Collaboration between police and community is a partnership building exercise
- Focused deterrence isn't just community relations: there has to be a carrot and stick
- It is important to offer social services, though the actual provision of services is not the game-changer for many
- Probation is an important hook in getting offenders to participate and heed warnings

4. Maintaining Departmental Buy-in for Community Trust & Collaboration

- Police leaders should drive the community collaboration message throughout recruiting, training, and managing officers
- Officers should remain in a positions for longer stretches of time to incentivize relationship building
- Implementing focused deterrence requires having the right people in leadership roles
- Focused deterrence can be achieved by a committed core in the police, community, probation, and prosecution
- Departments can do focused deterrence even without sophisticated crime analysis
- Giving officers opportunity to weigh in and to do the work they want builds police support
- Personal conversion stories matter; statistical evidence will not convince everyone
- Police don't have to view themselves as social workers for this to work – it's about building trust, legitimacy, and doing "what works"

5. Avoiding Mistakes

- Police and community members alike should not promise what they cannot deliver
- Police must be genuine to build relationships with community members
- Political leadership must be bought in and willing not to get in the way
- Be attentive to leadership transitions and ensure continued rapport

The Yale Law School Innovations in Policing Clinic is made up of Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza, Kyle Delbyck, Jamil Jivani (lead author for Milwaukee case study), Jeremy Kaplan-Lyman (lead author for Seattle case study), Jessica So, Trevor Stutz (lead author for High Point case study), Carolyn Van Zile (lead author for Charlotte-Mecklenburg case study), and Alyssa Work (lead author for Philadelphia case study).

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The principals on our team include John Crombach, Gail Christopher, Darrel Stephens and James Form

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