Problem Solving Quarterly

The Sine Qua Non of Policing

Sine Qua Non. This Latin phrase simply means "without which there is nothing." Professor Herman Goldstein applied this term during his opening remarks at the Second National **Problem-Oriented** Policing Conference to describe the core function of policing— the focus upon substantive problems in the community. In other words, without this focus on substantive problems in our community, we have no internal compass with which to guide our work.

Goldstein addressed the **current turbulence in the field of policing, the community response to this turbulence and the nature of change in a police department. The only way to fairly convey Goldstein's message is by presenting excerpts from the keynote address. The following text has been prepared for the benefit of those who missed the opportunity to** hear it firsthand, and for those **who were lucky enough to** attend, but wished they had brought a tape recorder.

"There are a lot of meetings in policing, but this one has several very unique characteristics to it. First of all, it brings together people who have much in common. If our experience of last year's conference is repeated, those of you here are at the cutting edge of new developments in policing. That makes for a very exciting--almost electrifying— kind of feeling. There is no need here to fight some of the old battles that are repeatedly fought in locker rooms, staff meetings, and many other conferences on the police.

This conference is also unique in that it is built around exploring a single concept of change in policing that many of you have been implementing to various degrees, and about which others of you are here to learn—problem-oriented policing. I want to emphasize that this is not intended as a conference at which a few of us will teach and the vast majority of you will listen. Problem-oriented policing is not a fixed

Letter From the Editor

In November 1991, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and the San Diego Police Department co-sponsored the Second National Problem-Oriented Policing Conference.

Interest in a conference on problem solving was clearly demonstrated by the number of registrants we received. The conference hosted nearly 400 **participants** from around the nation and Canada. Two months prior to the conference we closed registration due to space limitations and regretfully turned away 100 additional people seeking to register.

Officers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, majors, inspectors, chiefs, city managers, city council members, academies, researchers and city, state and federal government employees attended the three-day conference.

Participants were offered 27 different workshops including: Alarms; Noise Complaints; Convenience Store Robberies; Problem Identification and Analysis; Supervising Problem-Solvers; **Rethinking** Performance Appraisal Systems; Using Community Surveys to Analyze Problems; and Working with the Community to Address Problems.

We felt that it was important to share as much of the information we gained during the conference as possible with our readers. Toward that end, we have combined our Fall and Winter editions of **Problem-Solving Quarterly** to bring you this special publication.

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For this edition of **PSQ,** we have highlighted a few of the workshops offered at the conference: Homelessness and Panhandling; Eliminating Problems through Environmental Design; Convenience Store Robberies; Gangs; and Drugs in Public and Assisted Housing. In addition, we have printed excerpts from Professor Herman Goldstein's conference keynote speech.

As a result of the tremendous interest generated at the conference workshop entitled Leading The Change Process, this edition of **PSQ** also inaugurates a new column devoted to that subject. This issue's column (aptly entitled Leading the

Change) is written by Darrel Stephens, Executive Director of PERF, and former chief in Newport News, Virginia, the first site to implement problem-oriented policing department-wide.

This new column will focus on leadership. Leadership opportunities present themselves at every level in a department and employees must be encouraged to use each opportunity to aid officers and investigators doing problem solving. For example, leadership is displayed by a supervisor in guiding officers through crime data in their analysis of a problem; it is displayed by lieutenants in allowing and managing shift changes that facilitate an officer's work on a community problem; it is displayed by captains when they attend a roll call so they can formally recognize the efforts of a problem-solving officer before his or her peers; and it is also displayed by a chief when he or she selects a patrol officer who uses problem solving for promotion to detective.

Therefore, leadership must be capitalized upon at all levels in the department to help make problem-oriented policing succeed. As regards the chief executive, leadership must involve having far more than merely a vision; it must include behavior and action as well. An officer who cannot shift tours to meet with the buildings department inspector during the day cannot merely rely upon that chief executive's vision to close down a crack house. A vision needs to be supported by consistent messages and actions. A new and improved department "mission statement," unsup-

Leading the Change: The Role of the Chief Executive

By Darrel W. Stephens

Successful implementation of a **community-oriented,** problem-solving philosophy of policing requires the commitment and involvement of individuals at all levels of the department. No position other than the line officers is more important to the overall success of the effort than that of the chief executive. If the chief or sheriff have been influenced by their staff or others to implement a problem-solving approach, the chief must understand the implications of the decision **and** be prepared to communicate the "vision" inside and outside of the organization. The chief executive must be prepared to defend the vision and make decisions on a day-to-day basis that facilitate the work of officers doing problem solving.

Obviously this is a difficult role. A police department cannot stop production while the factory is retooled to accommodate the new model. The change must take place at a time when community expectations for service continue to mount. Police executives cannot make a unilateral decision to change the way services are provided. They must consult with and convince employees, political leaders, the business community, unions, community groups and others with a stake in policing that the change is worth the effort. Implementation requires the chief executive to carefully think through each step. If possible, it helps to develop a plan that indicates where the organization is going. In addition, it is important to work with those who may be the potential obstacles inside and outside of the department, paving the way for your problem-solving officers. It is also important to identify and follow up with those in your department who will have the responsibility for making sure the things that should be done are actually accomplished.

Those chief executives who have failed . . . have not had this vision. They just don't seem to get it.

The importance of the chief executive to this process cannot be overstated. The police agencies that I believe have had the most success are those led by a committed and thoughtful chief executive who has a clear mental picture of what policing should be. Those who have failed, or have implemented the "philosophy" using only special initiatives (while the mainstream patrol and investigations functions continue with business as usual), have not had this vision. They just don't seem to get it. They often simply reacted to pressure or the desire to be viewed as a progressive chief executive and used special initiatives to ward off public pressure for change.

Obviously the first step, even before the plan— is for the chief executive to develop that vision. There must be a sense that the way we police our communities needs to be changed. I believe we desperately need to change the way we **think about policing** and how we as police contribute to the quality of community life. This need for changing the way we think about policing will be the subject of this column in the next issue of PSQ.

Darrel Stephens is the executive director of PERF and former chief in Newport News, Virginia.

Making Convenience Store Robberies Inconvenient

By Captain Teresa Chambers

Pat Callahan of the Gainesville (FL) Police Department recognized that convenience store robberies in that city were a common occurrence. Of the 47 convenience stores located there, 45 **had** been robbed at least once in five years. While convenience stores made up only three percent of the business establishments in Gainesville, they accounted for 50 percent of the commercial robberies. Although the amount of cash taken in these robberies was often small, the cost to the community was significant; and included injuries to innocent bystanders **and** employees and police resources used for investigations of these crimes.

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Callahan examined the physical environment around these convenience stores, the personnel practices of the establishments, the staffing patterns of the stores and ordinances in other cities designed to address the problem of convenience store robberies.

He **found** that 75 percent of the robberies occurred between 7 pm and 5 am, **and** that in 92 percent of the robberies only one clerk was present. He determined **that personnel** staffing **policies and environmental** factors **contributed** to the convenience store robbery problem **in** Gainesville.

The Gainesville Police Department **pushed** for a local ordinance **mandating** specific crime prevention measures for convenience stores. The proposed ordinance required:

- Two or more employees work between 8 pm and 4 am

- A maximum of $50 be kept in the register

- A drop safe be installed in the floor

- Visual obstructions from the windows be removed

- Parking lots be well lit

- All store employees be trained in robbery prevention

- Operational robbery detection cameras be used

The local ordinance was enacted in 1986. Between 1986 **and** 1990, **convenience** store robberies in Gainesville decreased *89* percent. Apprehension of convenience store robbers increased during this same period from 29 percent to 81 percent. In Tallahassee, which is near Gainesville and similar in size, convenience store robberies had a large, steady increase during this same time period.

Between 1981 and 1986, prior to the ordinance, Gainesville convenience store employees sustained 18 injuries as a result of robberies. Since 1986, no injuries **have occurred.**

For a copy of **Convenience Store Robberies: An Innovative Strategy of the Gainesville Police Department,** write to: Patrick Callahan, Gainesville Police Department, P.O. Box 1250, Gainesville, Florida 32602. Please include $10.00 for copying, postage and handling.

Teresa Chambers is a captain with the Prince George's County (MD) Police Department.

ported by actions, rewards and sanctions may have little meaning to the officers and detectives addressing problems. Each rank above the line officer should be asking, "How do I pave the way for the officers and detectives to work on community problems?" Important decisions in the department (promotions, evaluations, transfers, hires) must be measured against whether they impede or improve a line officer's ability to address community problems.

The upcoming editions of **PSQ** will test the validity of these propositions and discuss the importance of leadership in promoting problem-oriented policing.

Rana Sampson, editor of PSQ and a senior researcher at PERF, was a former sergeant in the New York City Police Department.

Policing in Public and Assisted Housing

San Diego, G4—The task of policing America's troubled public and assisted housing took center stage during workshops at the Second National Problem-Oriented Policing Conference.

Main Themes

Two primary themes emerged during the workshops which featured practitioner presentations about application of problem-solving strategies.

First, in cities where police have been able to develop sustained and meaningful relationships with housing authorities, and to jointly identify problems that can be realistically undertaken, results are promising. In cities without that spirit of cooperation, **any** progress **achieved** by police appears to produce only temporary results.

Second, a common police response to problems in specific **neighborhoods** has been to dedi**cate additional resources to public and assisted housing de**velopments, such as foot patrols, mini-stations or other resources. These resources are perceived to have achieved some results because of their focus on specific problems within the troubled neighborhoods. The risk of dedicating such resources is the furtherance of specialized unit approaches to problems, rather than the generalist approach generally encouraged by problem-oriented policing advocates. Dedication of such resources also perpetuates the myth that simply adding more resources will solve crime **and** disorder problems.

Assisted Housing

Interagency collaboration has characterized the relationship of the San Diego Police Department and the San Diego Housing Commission, significantly affecting each agency's ability to resolve long-standing problems such as problem drug locations. But the relationship wasn't always so good, according to Sgt. Guy Swanger of the San Diego Police Department.

In early efforts to shut down drug houses, Swanger was dismayed to learn that drug dealers who received housing assistance were receiving housing subsidies from the federal government and could not be terminated from receiving assistance. Even if evicted for illegal drug activity, the tenant could move to another subsidized dwelling.

Drug dealers could not be terminated from receiving housing assistance.

Swanger worked aggressively **to make housing personnel aware** of **the problems** and to **determine** ways in which the agencies could address the recurring problems. "Our view is that it is their housing and they have to take responsibility for the problems that occur there," says Swanger.

Swanger now works closely with Carol Vaughn, director of **public and assisted housing for** the local housing commission. Vaughn agrees about the appropriate division of responsibilities between the housing commission **and** the police department that Swanger articulated. Once aware of illegal activity, the housing commission moves swiftly to evict **problem tenants and cease the** provision of benefits.

Public Housing

The workshop also featured Commander Aaron Campbell of the Metro-Dade (FL) Police Department who serves as chief of the department's public **housing police bureau. In that** role, Campbell works closely with Dade **County Housing** and Urban Development (HUD) which **manages** public and assisted housing in the metropolitan area. Campbell has a small squad of sworn officers who police targeted public housing communities. Each officer is "police chief" for the complex in which he or she works, says Campbell. As such, the officers have full responsibility for **everything** that happens in the development. Campbell has provided his officers with additional training to assist them in their job, **including** developing greater familiarity with the practices and **procedures** of **public housing administration.**

A similar approach to public **housing has occurred in Savannah,** Georgia, albeit without the close involvement of the local **housing** authority. Lt. Claire McCluskey, is commander of the agency's personnel in four major public housing developments.

During her tour of duty, McCluskey has developed specialized knowledge of the problems and needs in the developments. Officers staff mini-stations in each complex in order to provide residents with

(Housing Cont. from page 5) greater informal access to police personnel. The proximity of the **mini-stations has enhanced trust** between residents and police.

Each officer is "police chief" for the complex in which he or she works.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, public housing is concentrated in the northern area of the city. This area is served by the police department's uniformed division north, commanded by Major Charles Jackson. Jackson's personnel have implemented foot patrols and officers are given discretion to explore a variety of approaches to address and resolve problems. Like **Savannah,** the police department in Tulsa has achieved little co-operation from the housing authority.

As an alternative approach, officers have worked directly with housing managers for individual complexes, achieving their cooperation in enforcing trespassing ordinances. In addition, officers are working directly with residents in the complexes, particularly to address the special needs of youth in the communities.

Deborah Lamm Weisel is a senior researcher with PERF and author of Tackling Drug Problems in Public Housing: A Guide for Police.

(Goldstein, cont. from page 1) concept, but a set of ideas with some structure that has to be fleshed out. From the outset, it was always intended that problem-oriented policing would be a dynamic concept which would change with the years, and be expanded **and** developed through the work of practitioners such as you. This conference, with your help, is one means of **advancing** that objective.

There is yet another characteristic to this conference. We have a mix of chiefs, **rank-and-**file officers, high level staff, middle management, and supervisors. Major elements in problem-oriented policing are the relaxation of the old chain of command, the engagement of **rank-and-file** officers, the promotion of communication, and the critical thinking throughout the organisation without regard to rank. It is appropriate that these are reflected in a conference on problem-oriented policing. This is one of the few forums in which police officers from various sized departments of all ranks will be engaging each other as professional colleagues to draw upon **a** wealth of knowledge **and** experience.

At the outset, I think it is essential that a conference that relates to policing in 1991 takes note of the turbulence in our field and the impact it has on the subject matter of this conference. This has been **a** very critical year for policing. It has been another year of major crises, marred by the flurry of criticism, study, great public interest, and the search for solutions. On reflection, one can pin down at least four major developments that are attributable to this commotion. One development comes from

national attention upon the incidents in Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and elsewhere in the country, and specifically upon the police. The problems that occurred in each of those communities set in motion a time warp scenario of trying to assess responsibility and blame through study, introspection and ultimately a search for new approaches. That search continues.

This has been a very critical year for policing . . . a year of major crises, criticism, great public interest, and the search for solutions.

The second major factor is the growing concern about the deteriorating conditions in our urban areas. This concern grows more acute when combined with the various economic factors, demographic changes, physical deterioration, problems in our schools, and drug use. Together these conditions have created this sense of crisis which exists in our urban areas. As this accumulation of social agendas remains unfulfilled, the development of frustration and despair escalates with enormous consequences for the police: violence, racial tensions, disorder and widespread fear. I should add that these are not exclusive to our large urban areas. **In** the past months and years, this phenomenon has spread to previously safe neighborhoods within those areas, the suburbs, and even to rural areas and is adding to the sense of crisis.

Brother Can You Spare A Dime?

With the **burgeoning** numbers of homeless persons **and** panhandlers in our cities, police are being **challenged** to find innovative ways to address the concerns of **complainants** and the needs of persons living on the streets. **Participants** at the Second National Problem-Oriented Policing Conference were given the opportunity to explore this problem and its possible responses. Moderated by Mike Scott, Director of Administration with the Fort Pierce (FL) Police Department, the workshop addressed the police responses to homelessness and **panhandling** in several jurisdictions around the country.

Who are the homeless?

A **presentation** by **Lieutenant** Barney Melekian of the Santa Monica (CA) Police Department highlighted the gains that can be **achieved by developing an ac**-curate assessment of homelessness-related problems. The Santa Monica Police Department conducted a probing study of their homeless problem when the community became torn by two opposing views: an unwillingness to prosecute arrests for quality-of-life offenses (trespassing, public urination, etc.) on the part of the city attorney's office, **and** the demand for enforcement of existing trespassing laws made by business groups and citizens.

Melekian described three problems that were the focus of the department's study: 1) the dozens of homeless people who habitually slept in the park at night and loitered there during the day, 2) **panhandling,** and 3) the number of calls for service made by both the homeless population and "an increasingly apprehensive and fearful public."

In an effort to accurately appraise the problem, the department began to track all calls for service that were related to homelessness or panhandling. They found that 26.9 percent of all calls for service related to **homelessness and panhandling.** This information has helped the department argue persuasively that homelessness-related offenses consume a disproportionate amount of resources. It has been used to lobby the city attorney's office for changes in their policies toward homelessness.

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In **Savannah,** Georgia, police felt they needed to understand who homeless persons were before specific strategies could be devised. Major Dan Reynolds discussed a study conducted by his department to determine the characteristics of their homeless **population. Through interviews** with homeless persons and a review of calls for service, the department attempted to get an accurate picture of the type of people who are homeless in the city, where they came from, why they were homeless and the degree to which they were

perpetrators or victims of crime. The department found that people who were homeless were involved in less than one percent of all calls for service and Part I crimes city-wide. Further, most of the crimes committed by homeless people were Part II offenses like petty larceny and shoplifting (for more information see the article on homelessness in the Summer 1991 issue of **PSQ).**

Presentations of the work done in Savannah and Santa Monica served to emphasize the importance of **conducting a** faithful determination of each community's homeless problem. While the department's perception may be that the homeless people in that jurisdiction are responsible for a large number of calls for service and serious crime, as was the case in **Savannah,** these perceptions must be corroborated through **independent analysis before an** appropriate police response can be formulated.

In **Savannah** the department was under a lot of pressure to "do something" about the homeless people who were allegedly committing a significant number of serious crimes. Once the department studied its reports, it discovered that people who were homeless were responsible for only a very small percentage of the department's workload. However, in Santa Monica the department's suspicions were confirmed when they discovered that people who were homeless were responsible for 26 percent of all calls for service and accounted for 53 percent of all **burglary** arrests **and** 46 percent of all rape arrests (based on arrests between

January and May of 1990). Each department recognized the necessity of <u>obtaining</u> reliable information before implementing a response.

Doing Something

PERF staffer Halley Porter presented an update on PERF's project to improve the police response to street persons. Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the project includes a survey of the largest law enforcement agency practices, perceptions, policies, training and support systems used by police in responding to the needs of street persons. The study will identify common problems **and** concerns **and** pinpoint departments with innovative policies and programs. PERF will conduct on-site analyses in upcoming months. The project will be completed in July 1992.

Protected Speech?

Mike Scott, a police practitioner and a lawyer, provided participants with information on legal cases that addressed the constitutional issues surrounding homelessness and **panhandling.** Scott suggested that, based on cases decided in the states of Washington, Florida, New York **and California, panhandling** cannot be banned categorically. It is protected speech. However, case law does indicate that arrests can be made of panhandlers who engage in prohibited aggressive or threatening behavior.

The limits of enforcement were brought home by the recent events in Santa Ana, California. Officers from Santa Ana were open and candid in discussing the outcome of aggressive

enforcement practices that focused on quality-of-life offenses. The department was ruled to have violated the civil rights of 64 homeless people, and in a scathing decision was ordered to pay several hundred thousand dollars. Officers from Santa Ana emphasized the need to **pay** careful attention to equal enforcement of the laws in this area.

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Scott noted what some have called a "compassion fatigue" in our cities. The public is growing weary of squatters, panhandlers and street people and have begun to ask police agencies to address these problems with increasing force. Scott contends that unless the police are successful in controlling the most serious aspects of this problem, citizens will become even less sympathetic to the plight of the homeless and public support for food, shelter programs and other resources will disappear altogether and worsen the problem. The consensus of the workshop presenters was that in order to address the problems related to homeless people in our communities we must first identify who they are and precisely the types of problems in which they are involved.

Halley Porter is a research associate at PERF.

Eliminating Problems Through Environmental Design

By Captain Teresa Chambers

Proper **design and** effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the incidence **and** fear of crime in a **neighborhood, according to** Sergeant Al Taylor of the Tempe (AZ) Police Department. In his workshop on eliminating prob**lems through environmental** design, Taylor discussed the principles of Crime **Prevention** Through **Environmental** Design (CPTED).

Areas should be designed to allow plenty of opportunity for community residents to observe the space around them.

In every problem-solving effort, officers, as part of their **analysis, should** examine whether the physical environment contributes to the problem they are working to address. If it does, principles of CPTED may be useful in developing an effective response to the problem.

Key Qualities

Taylor described four key qualities of a secure environment. The first, "natural surveillance," is based on the fact that most criminals do not want to be observed while committing crimes.

Areas should be designed to allow plenty of **opportunity** for community residents to observe the space **around** them. The second concept is "access control." Criminal intruders will often try to gain entrance to areas where they will not be easily observed. Limiting access can keep them out altogether. The third concept, "territoriality," is based on the belief that people take more interest in something they own. A person who has a vested interest in an area is more likely to challenge intruders or report them to the police. In an environment that has a sense of owned space, outsiders stand out and are more easily identified. The final concept is "activity support." This involves choosing the location of an activity so that it invites members of the community to become part of the natural surveillance system and thereby create a secure environment.

Innovative Responses

The Tempe Police Department used the CPTED **philosophy** to remedy a juvenile loitering problem in a local business area. Business owners **began playing** classical music over loudspeakers outside their establishments. Several juveniles were interviewed by a local newspaper reporter. One youth commented that the music was "irritating" and "if it continued, they were not coming back." The **music continued and the youths no longer** congregated there.

In another business area, pay **phones were being used by drug dealers to transact their drug deals. Using CPTED concepts,** business owners installed rotary phones in lieu of push button ones. As a **result, drug dealers could no longer access personal pagers via these phones.**

In an environment that has a sense of owned space, outsiders stand out and are more easily identified.

CPTED has also been used to successfully resolve other serious crimes. At a local Tempe library, several sexual assaults of children occurred near the library's bathrooms. When crime **prevention** officers looked at the facility, they made several recommendations including relocating public phones away from the restrooms. Relocating phones was suggested because it was determined that offenders waited unnoticed by the phones for their victims and were using the phones as a natural cover for their activities. In addition, a second library book check-out desk was positioned near the restrooms so check-out employees would notice anyone **loitering nearby.**

In Tempe, a group of officers assigned to one beat are using a **problem-oriented** approach in their work. These officers have received CPTED training and will be using it as part of their analysis of the problems in their beat.

For more information, contact Sgt. Al Taylor of the Tempe Police Department at (602) 350-8749.

The third major development or **observation** I have made is the **unprecedented** congestion in the criminal justice system. Since I have entered this field, police have always complained about the delays in the criminal justice system, **and** if different, police would be able to function more efficiently and more effectively. The situation today indicates that the police are now increasingly being precluded from using their own criminal justice system. I was in a California community a few weeks ago in which the officers were looking at the number of arrests made over the weekend. They showed me a list that was returned from the prosecutor's office which indicated that 30 percent of the arrests they had made were going to be dropped — not because of lack of evidence, rather the budgetary constraints precluded prosecution.

Police are precluded from using [the] criminal justice system ... dangerous signals that the system is failing apart.

Included in this third development, we are seeing yet **another phenomenon which** erodes **the criminal** justice system: high rates of failures to appear. In the past, if a person failed to appear we would issue a warrant. Today, we accumulate records of people who fail to appear and in some cases must wait until we have ten other failures to appear, before we can get a warrant issued or bond attachment to bring this person

in. Those are dangerous signals that the system is falling apart. I think the full significance of that danger has not yet been recognized. We give officers the aura of authority and power, with the notion that if a person does not do what the officers ask, they are authorized to do something more serious with that person. In my view, that aura is being greatly eroded.

The fourth and final factor is that we are in a recession; there is a regression in spending. I have spoken to chiefs of police who talk about the art of managing reduced budgets. Every police agency I talk to is understaffed. Beyond that, there are more wholesale cuts in other services of municipal government. And when social service agencies or other governmental agency experience budgetary cuts very often the consequences produce more problems for the police. So that raises the questions: How do we perform? With what? How do we respond to all of this?

To try to study and reflect on the nature of the responses to these critical developments, I have roughly categorized the ways in which the communities and some police respond to these conditions. The first category, is "the newly awakened." These are some of the sleepy people who have been off in the distance. A very frustrated reporter came to me recently. His community was experiencing problems for the first time **and** he said, "What's happening? Why are we experiencing all this plea bargaining, this crime? Where are the police? Why aren't they doing their job?" Sarcastically, I said, "Maybe it is something in the water supply." How can anybody be living in our society without

knowing what is going on? So the "newly awakened" is the first category.

Some responses to today's turbulent conditions include "the newly awakened," "the nostalgic," "the quick-fix," and "the more studied response."

The second category is the "nostalgic." These are the people who are awakened and yearn and pray for the return of the certainty of the order of the past. There is no real recognition of the dynamics of what is happening in our society. The response of these individuals is "let's get cover." If it is a small community they say, "let's get 10 more police officers," others say, "100 more police officers or 500 more police officers." With increased force, we can wipe this problem out and go back to those wonderful days **when everything** was so calm and of no great concern or consequence. So, the "nostalgic" is the second category.

Then there is the third category, those looking for the "quick fix," instant satisfaction. Their whole concept of life is one of pressing the buttons and something happening. Got a problem? Get it solved tomorrow. And so they are ready to implement instant solutions. Much of the interest in the programs loosely identified under the community policing umbrella takes that form. "Send me a packet so that I can implement it tomorrow to get rid of all these

Taking a Closer Look at Gangs

By John Stedman

Participants at the Second National Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in San Diego had the opportunity to **learn more about gangs and how** police departments use problem-oriented policing to address them. Two **gang** workshops were held during the conference. Both were well attended and generated **thought-provoking** discussions.

Overview

Each workshop session was opened by Deborah Lamm Weisel, a senior researcher at PERF. Three participants from the audience were asked to describe the most troublesome gang in their jurisdictions. They gave the name, ethnic background, organizational structure, location, age range and the activity of most concern of the gang. As participants talked about their **gangs,** their descriptions illustrated the diversity of gangs and gang activities around the country. Weisel pointed out that the variations among the descriptions reflected the findings of gang researchers nationwide.

Research on gangs across the United States is yielding a fresh perspective on gang activities. Gang researchers **have found** that gangs are not always organized in a hierarchical fashion. The characteristics of gangs change over time; and, gangs are likely to appear in areas with higher levels of population migration. In most cases, gang violence is not related to drug activity.

Representatives of several departments which have taken a **problem-solving** approach to dealing with **gangs** described the efforts of their agencies.

Research on gangs across the United States is yielding a fresh perspective on gang activities.

Problem-Oriented Solutions in San Diego

Officer Andy Mills of the San Diego Police Department described the enforcement and suppression efforts used in a gang-infested area of the city. He recounted how the department involved members of the community in a neighborhood clean-up of two such areas in San Diego.

In most cases, gang violence is not related to drug activity.

San Diego found there were four elements of a successful response to gangs: 1) a response led by the police department, 2) some type of enforcement effort against gangs, 3) the enforcement activity must be selected by the police, 4) and, involvement by the community.

Santa Ana, California

Lieutenant Bill Tegler of the Santa Ana (CA) Police Department described how his department uses problem-oriented policing to deal with territorial, Hispanic gangs and newly emerging, non-territorial **Asian gangs. In Santa Ana,** patrol officers are using the problem-solving model to address gang problems. They target the three most problematic **gangs,** identify their leaders and **attempt** to **take those leaders out of circulation. Police** officers also **examine environmental conditions in areas where** gangs are active to determine if changes can be made to reduce gang problems. Additionally, in Santa Ana, the courts assign gang members to go into communities and paint over graffiti and clean up neighborhoods as part of a court-referral process.

Corona, California

Sgt. Tim Payne of the Corona (CA) Police Department discussed how his department focused on lower level gang members in certain neighborhoods and the efforts to redirect them away from the gangs. The goal is to undermine the influence **which** hard core gang leaders have over lower level gang members. The department has developed mentoring and work programs aimed at these lower level members. It has also enlisted the efforts of a mother of a gang member to act as a liaison between the police **and** gangs.

Lakewood, Colorado

Finally, Sgt. Ernest Wolf of the Lakewood (CO) Police Department described a program which the community developed to deal with gang problems. This effort involves enforcement, education, public relations, the provision of

alternative activities, and the use of volunteers. As the program was implemented, those responsible for carrying it out discovered a need to provide **gang** education to all persons involved in the project. Police officers, as well as city officials, educators and community leaders needed training on gang identification, behavior, **and** prevention and control activities.

The department enlisted the mother of a gang member to act as a liaison between the police and gangs.

Weisel pointed out that the diversity of gangs, and how communities react to them, have implications for developing appropriate responses. The response should not ignore the importance of accurately defining the gang problem in each community; collecting and disseminating information to agencies or groups involved in addressing **gang** problems; **and, measuring the effectiveness of the various** responses or programs directed at gangs.

John Stedman is a senior researcher at PERF.

problems damaging our communities." They seek a "quick fix" to their problems.

Finally, in the fourth category there are those looking for " a more studied response." I put this all into one category which says, "There is a need for change but it is not easy. It must be part of a carefully **thought-through** plan. It is not a product of immediate, flashy results." We in this category are saying to the community, "Do not look to us to solve all of your ills." What we are doing is taking on the challenge of designing the most suitable, thoughtful response to the current needs and problems. We try to make the best of what is admittedly a very, very difficult situation. Needless to say, I think that this is the more realistic and more logical position for police to take today.

How does one design a form of police services best equipped to meet the peculiar needs of these very troubled times? Jurisdictions are trying to develop a plan under various umbrellas. This is what I see in some of the proposals for community policing programs; some are very comprehensive and do not prematurely promise immediate results. This kind of more thoughtful development is certainly what we had in mind when we talked about problem-oriented policing. In that context, we ask ourselves today how is problem-oriented policing holding up; what progress is being realized; what can be done to protect it from being overwhelmed and lost in the tumult of these times.

My impression is that there is a great deal of interest in

problem-oriented policing around the country. The term has been incorporated into the language of innovation. It is part of an elective kind of policing these days. Certainly based upon the inquiries that we are receiving, and certainly reflected in the interest in this conference (where we have almost 400 people, and **have turned away** about 100) the community interest in problem-oriented policing is great. It is reflected in the demand that some of us get for training in this area.

Through informal contacts, I am learning of an increasing number of departments that have implemented problem-oriented policing with impressive results, many of which are represented here today.

We are taking on the challenge of designing the most suitable, thoughtful response to the communities' needs and problems.

There are many early indicators that provide renewed confidence in the overall direction in which we are going. The experiences are particularly reassuring that not only are we on the right track but that there is enormous talent in the police field. Much of the initiative for problem-oriented policing has come from within the police field. Individuals such as yourself are perhaps the most significant contributors.

As mentioned earlier, there have been a number of external

factors that have indirectly lent momentum to problem-oriented policing.

These external factors give this sense of crisis that I identified, and in a sense have created an **unprecedented** search for new ways of doing things. There is an enormous hunger out there by the police, by public officials, by communities, by the media; and there is a respect for new ideas where previously there was none. There is even a readiness on the part of veteran police officers, hard-nosed police officers who are saying, "Hey, this is not working. We have got to do something differently." I have kicked around in this field for 35 years and I have never seen **anything** like the recent unprecedented receptiveness to new ideas.

## There is a respect for new ideas where previously there was none.

The blockage in the criminal justice system, more than anything, creates the demand for the development of new alternatives to how we get the job done. We have seen this in numerous contexts. I was in a meeting recently in Sacramento, and I heard people who are organizing their community and working with the police saying, "Look, we are beyond the stages of being concerned about what happens to these people, whether or not they are punished, whether or not they go into the system. We are at a stage where we just want to get rid of the problem and we want to do those things that will most directly attack the problem." So, **individuals** are much

less oriented toward seeing prosecution or arrest as the ultimate measure of success; not **perhaps** as a matter of choice, but for practical reasons because they do not think we have the resources to take all these people into the criminal justice system.

Now that does not mean we are **abandoning** the criminal justice system—on the contrary. What it means is that maybe we can save that system, reserve that system for those cases in which it is most appropriate and can do the greatest amount of good while we push hard on the development of alternatives to the system so as to deal with these problems on the street. Certainly the shortage of dollars is another major motivating factor that is pressing for greater initiatives for "smarter policing." It is cheaper ultimately to prevent, to get at these things at the source, and to accept that there is a business sense that is coming to bear on policing. The need is being articulated in this form. Even if people are not ideologically committed to the use of alternatives to the criminal justice system, this business sense will often make converts out of these **individuals.** In summary, the current crisis indirectly lends much support to problem-oriented policing, **and** much of that support is coming from unlikely sources. I think all of that is a positive sign of change for us; however, our popularity is not always a blessing.

Problem-oriented policing is not quite as sexy a concept as community policing. Despite the efforts of some of us, both terms are often viewed as synonymous. And to the degree that they are, there is a sort of a magnetic attraction. A wonderful article
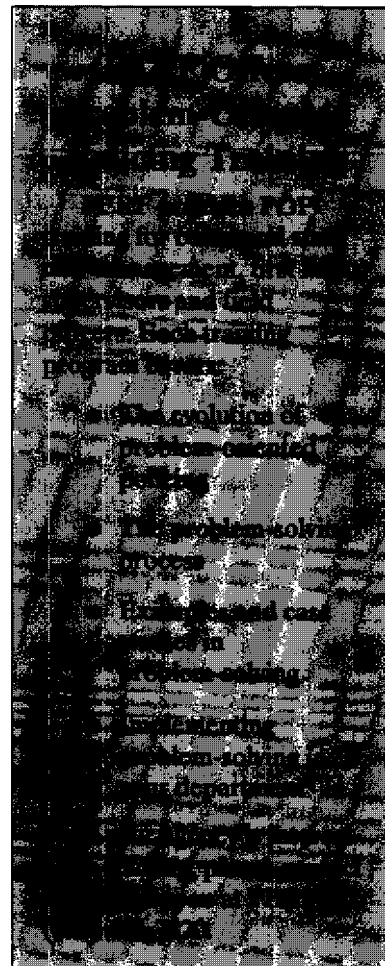
appeared this past week in the New York Times about New **Haven, Connecticut, and what** they are doing there. The author talked about the concept of community policing and referred to it as the "catchy gospel of community policing" which I think captures the flurry of interest in it. At a time when there is such a high level of frustration about how to deal with the complex problems that plague our urban **areas, it is understandable why something can take on this kind of magnetic quality.**

Now I have noticed some individuals in the police who want to convert **overnight.** They want to leap frog from years of

neglect into putting problem-oriented policing in tomorrow. Beyond the expectations of how fast we can achieve change in policing, there is the implication that problem-oriented policing will produce immediate results; that it is certainly better than what was in place. **In** some situations there is the notion that it will eliminate or reduce crime, violence or drugs. There are even some that might argue that by the police eliminating some of the most superficial surface indications of these problems, the community will no longer need to do **anything** about the underlying problems of poverty, racism, unemployment, illiteracy and poor housing, etc. In other words, the police would take the edge off, and we could go back to that sort of nostalgic situation in which life is just as rosy as we would like it to be, perpetuating that old notion *(which* has been such a burden to the police) of "just leave it to the police."

The shortage of dollars is one motivating factor for "smarter policing."

It is obviously not possible even to produce limited modest results without building a solid foundation. Ideally, we have to invest years in changing the orientation within a police department before we can begin constructing the house. I talk about the nature of change in a police department. In the past change was achieved in our police agencies almost ex-**clusively through death and** resignation. It is important to make it clear that problem-oriented policing (as enraptured

as you might be with the concept) is not a quick fix. Implementation takes much time. It is not easy, especially in an atmosphere of great pressure and crises. There are a lot of risks taken. The results are slow in coming. So, as enthusiastic as you might be, you see lots of potential, but let's face it; even with the most solid foundation, nothing that the police can do is so strong and so effective that it will deal with the overwhelming social, economic and political problems that plague our cities. The police are not omnipotent, they are not miracle workers. However, police can make sure their practices and policies do not aggravate already existing problems. They can help identify underlying problems. They may be able to mitigate these problems and to keep some of them from getting worse, but they can hold the line just so long, until some larger social forces are mobilized to deal with these problems more effectively.

Why do I dwell on these points at a keynote address like this? For three reasons. One, I think it is imperative to avoid overselling problem-oriented policing, lest its value is measured by unrealistic standards. That would be its death. Second, I think every opportunity must be taken to warn communities against abdicating their responsibility to address underlying problems simply because the police are doing what they are doing. And third, we have to make it clear to all officers, especially rank-and-file officers who are urged to get involved in problem solving, that they are not being held responsible for solving problems that no one else is willing or able to resolve. That is much too heavy a burden to

carry. It is dysfunctional for the officer.

Unrealistic expectations are threatening to all progress. I want to recognize that change in policing is not a neat and fast process. For every meaningful implementation of any change, there are several others that do not go anywhere, that have failed. And that is certainly true with regard to this development.

The nature of change within a police department ... is a process achieved almost exclusively through death and resignation.

As I **noted, problem-oriented policing has many facets** of which but a small piece is being implemented. There is a big problem of dilution when there is no real understanding of what problem-oriented policing means. Problem-oriented policing is often interwoven with community policing, and the elements of problem-oriented policing get lost in the process.

So what can we do to strengthen the maximum value of problem-oriented policing? One response is to keep our eye on the ball—to focus on what I refer to as the "substantive problems," the product of policing. Those of you familiar with problem-oriented policing know that its very core is the collection of issues into substantive problems. This includes the varied behaviors that police must handle and the chunks of activity that

really constitute police business. In problem-oriented policing training we talk about the various ways in which we can group issues and describe problems, whether it is by form of conduct, spousal abuse, noise, drive-by-shootings or drug use; or whether it is the locale, the neighborhood, the intersection or a building; or whether it is people, a group of individuals, a particular gang or a specific individual; or whether it is the time, a particular season, a particular month, a day of the week, time of the day, or just a particular event. They are not mutually exclusive. Grouping and describing, thus, becomes one way of getting a better understanding of the core problem.

For every meaningful implementation of any change, there are several that have failed.

I often try to explain problem-oriented policing with an analogy to the medical profession. For those involved with the study of medicine, the major focus is on disease or injury. The focus then is not on surgery, not on the number of hospital beds, and not even on doctor-patient relationships. Those other things only come into focus as they bear upon the treatment of the problem. So in policing, the focus must be on the problems for which the police are responsible. Not on criminal law, nor on the number of officers, or cars. And certainly not just on the relationship between the police

and the community **and** how they feel about it. All **of** those things are terribly important, but what is it we are **trying to achieve?** Remember, when we stray from that focus, we really lose the **meaning of problem-oriented** policing.

We have made great progress where **problem-oriented** policing has been implemented. Officers today here in San Diego, **and** elsewhere are **identifying and outlining** specific problems on their beat. They know this **distinction. They are getting involved in a detailed exami-**nation of the "diseases" so to speak. The departments are **identifying and analyzing** problems in their cities. This is a very welcome focus. The officers are saying they are able to get their teeth into something, and that they are not impeded by the internal management of the department. That means that things are small enough to bite off, and we can have an immediate impact. That is very, very **satisfying.** And I **think** you are going to see some of the evidence of that in the workshops that you attend.

Progress has been slow. I think it has because we are conditioned to focusing on the process of the police department. We are much happier talking about the cars and uniforms, the nature of the organization, the line of command, the forms and procedures and all those things. We are more accustomed to that than we are to saying, "Now to what avail is all this; what is the impact of it?" Addressing substantive problems is new and is sometimes very, very difficult. It takes police into an area in which they have little experience. It is true that in order to shift gears, in

order to get to that business of **addressing substantive problems,** we do have to be concerned **about** process. **Implementing** a new concept like problem-oriented policing requires a focus on process for implementing that **concept.**

To strengthen the maximum value of problem-oriented policing, we must focus on substantive problems.

This dilemma is reflected in the program in which you are going to be participating over these next several days. You will see it in the workshops; the workshops devoted to the process and the workshops devoted to specific problems in com-**munities** that officers **have** worked to address. Right now there are as many if not more workshops devoted to process, and that creates a bit of an imbalance. But that is under-standable at this stage because the implementation process is important in getting going. But we should be mindful of the potential imbalance here. Remember that the exploration of process, of how to get going, how to evaluate officers in this context, how to manage officers who are involved in problem-oriented policing, etc., has value **and** meaning only as it con-tributes ultimately to addressing the substantive problems of the business of policing— the sine qua non, without which there is **nothing.**

Now many of you are already immersed with the specific sub-

stantive problems in your communities. I urge all of you to give special attention to the workshops on substantive problems; to learn from the experiences of departments that have worked through new responses to old problems in differing sizes and complexity; to share in the enormous sense of satisfaction that comes from devising new, creative responses that **actually** work. In the **continued evaluation of problem-oriented policing,** I see the day when there will not only be a fuller agenda devoted to substantive problems but there will be many spin-off conferences rather than an occasional conference or training session as is now the case. These will dwell on specific problems commonly experienced by police agencies, pooling the knowledge that police themselves have developed about pieces of their business and the effects of an alternative response to them.

Specifically, I urge you to keep PERF staff informed of experiences with problem-solving that should be shared by writing them up and including them in the publication of **Problem-Solving Quarterly;** shared by informing PERF that a problem you focused on is something you would like to report on at next year's conference; shared by police officers of all ranks writing about their experiences in solving problems and getting them into print.

I chose to dwell on but one of the major needs I see in the development of problem-oriented policing; the need to focus on substantive problems and to share that experience in order to emphasize its importance. As you can imagine, caught up as I am in the spread of this idea, I am acutely aware of many other needs to which I could devote equal time; I assure you I am not going to do so. Instead, in very summary form, I wanted to just share with you as colleagues in this endeavor, the concerns in my mind, and the hope that this sharing will stimulate your thinking at this conference and beyond."

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