

The author(s) shown below used Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice and prepared the following final report:

Document Title: From Problem Solving to Crime Suppression to Community Mobilization: An Evaluation of the St. Louis Consent-to-Search Program

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Document No.: 188291

Date Received: 06/12/2001

Award Number: 95-IJ-CX-0067

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From Problem Solving to Crime Suppression to Community Mobilization: An Evaluation of the St. Louis Consent-to-Search Program

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National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)
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FINAL REPORT

Approved By: *J. [Signature]*

Date: 5/11/01

February 2001

Draft. Do not quote or cite without permission.

NIJ accepted this version as final - May 15, 2001

Criminal violence attained critical levels in the United States during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many American cities experienced unprecedented rates of homicide, and some authoritative observers expressed concern that the increases were the leading edge of a trend that would escalate to even higher levels. The flash point for much of the attention was the increase in youth violence, especially youth violence involving firearms.

This paper reports on the promising problem-solving efforts of one city police department faced with very high levels of violence. The department performed each of the steps in the problem-solving model: scanning, analysis, response, and assessment (Goldstein, 1993). And each of the steps seemed to yield important results. A serious problem was identified, firearm violence that involved youth. An appropriate analysis was conducted, identifying the locations, nature, and outcomes of the problem. The response was designed to correspond closely to the analysis. Police officers housed within a special unit of the department received voluntary parental consent to search their homes for illegal firearms belonging to juveniles. Thus was born the St. Louis "consent-to-search" program. Assessment of the early results was quite positive: The program was nominated for a PERF Goldstein award, US Senate testimony about the intervention was invited, and the department received considerable acclaim for its efforts. Despite these promising features, the program in its original form was discontinued. This paper offers an analysis of the process leading to the program's demise and re-emergence. We believe the story we have to tell about the fate of the St. Louis consent-to-search program has important implications for problem-solving initiatives elsewhere.

The central theme of the story is the sustainability of law-enforcement innovations in the face of strong organizational resistance and weak external support. We observed three distinct phases of program implementation. An early *problem-solving* phase was consistent with the

design for the intervention. It was marked by significant, albeit diffuse, community support, and strong internal leadership. The second *crime-suppression* phase of the implementation occurred at the time the NIJ evaluation was funded and, in its return to the principles and procedures of traditional police work, differed significantly from the initial plan for the program. The third phase of the program was more consistent with the early design. We refer to this as the *community-mobilization* phase because the police sought to integrate community groups in the program. Although not without its limitations, the third phase represents the best chance for successful implementation and integration into departmental culture and structure of innovations such as the consent-to-search program.

THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

The consent-to-search program emerged during the youth violence epidemic of the late 1980s and early 1990s (Cook and Laub, 1998). After falling for several years, the homicide rates of persons between 14 and 24 years-old escalated rapidly after 1985, reaching a peak in 1993. All of the increase in youth homicide occurred in the firearm category; non-gun homicides involving youthful offenders or victims remained flat during the period (Blumstein, 2000; Blumstein and Rosenfeld, 1998). In 1992 a record number of violent crimes were committed with handguns (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993). In just the four-year period from 1987 through 1991, the percentage of adolescent homicides committed with a gun rose to 78% from 64%, and in 1991 juveniles accounted for one of every five persons arrested on weapons charges (Allen-Hagen and Sickmund, 1993). There is no question that firearms were at the center of the youth violence epidemic.

By the early 1990s, guns were readily available to children in many cities through street corner markets (American Psychological Association, 1993). Firearm availability is linked to

increased firearm use for juveniles. A nationally representative survey of public and private elementary, middle and high school students, estimated that one in ten youths aged ten through nineteen had fired a gun at someone or had been shot at themselves (Sommerfeld, 1993). Forty percent of the respondents to that survey said they knew someone who had been killed or wounded by gunfire. Guns were easily obtained by survey respondents: 60% said they could get a handgun, and more than a third said they could do so within 24 hours.

A leading explanation for the upsurge in youth violence in the late 1980s suggests that the epidemic was spawned initially in and around urban crack markets and then diffused throughout inner-city communities in the form of a classic arms race (Blumstein, 1995). Surveys of inner-city youth found gun possession among males to be quite common (Sheley and Wright, 1993; 1995; Sheley, Wright and Smith, 1993). Although involvement in drug sales sharply increased gun carrying, self reports of gun carrying were also high among those not involved in the drug markets.

The national patterns of youth firearm violence were reproduced in St. Louis, the only difference being the much higher overall level of criminal violence in St. Louis compared with other cities. The St. Louis homicide rate reached 70 per 100,000 residents in 1991, and the city's homicide rate ranked among the top five of large American cities throughout the early 1990s. As with the national trend, the homicide increase in St. Louis was concentrated among African-American adolescents and young adults, and was restricted to the firearm category. By the early 1990s, the homicide rate for black males age 15-19 reached 380 per 100,000; the rate for black males age 20-24 reached an astonishing 600 per 100,000. Over 97% of these deaths involved firearms (Rosenfeld and Decker, 1996).

It is clear from these findings that successful interventions to reduce serious youth violence in St. Louis would have to focus on firearms. Although levels of homicide and other forms of criminal violence are sharply higher in St. Louis than in most other cities, the demographic patterns of risk are quite similar to those for the nation as a whole (Jones and Krisberg, 1994; Snyder and Sickmund, 1995). In addition, changes in St. Louis homicide rates over the past 30 years correspond closely with those for the nation as a whole (Rosenfeld and Decker, 1996). Taken together, these patterns suggest the importance of monitoring gun acquisition by youth at risk for involvement in gun violence either as victims or offenders, and that interventions shown to be effective in St. Louis might be promising candidates for broader implementation and evaluation.

RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE

As St. Louis homicide rates rose to record levels in the early 1990s, a number of calls to action were issued. The Mayor's Office urged action on the part of citizens to combat crime in their neighborhoods. The state legislature responded with the creation of a "Truth in Sentencing" law that required offenders convicted of the "seven deadly sins" to serve a minimum of 85% of their sentence. Churches and religious groups initiated a series of meetings and proclamations, including the declaration of a "homicide free" month, during which, unfortunately, homicides reached a record monthly total. The daily newspaper printed a daily "toll" of the number of homicide victims for the year on the front page of each edition, reminding readers of the dubious distinction borne by their city.

The police department was not left out of the response to what was rapidly being identified as the city's major social problem. A Violent Crimes Task Force was formed, and the homicide unit was beefed up with additional personnel. A massive gun buyback ensued in 1991.

Led by the Police Chief, the program netted more than 7,500 firearms. A second more limited buyback was initiated in 1994 and brought in 1,200 guns. Although an evaluation showed no impact of either program on rates of firearm violence, the buyback effort served to focus additional public attention on the issue of firearm violence in the city and served as a form of community mobilization (Rosenfeld, 1996). Among other innovations to emerge from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police department was the Firearm Suppression Program (FSP) (Rosenfeld and Decker, 1996).

The St. Louis FSP had three components: (1) tracing the serial numbers of confiscated firearms, (2) a review of Sheriff's records for firearms transactions to determine patterns of "straw" purchases, and (3) using "consent searches" to confiscate guns illegally possessed by juveniles. Our evaluation focused on the final of the three proposals. In this report, we examine the feasibility of such an intervention, its impact, and the organizational response to innovation within the police department.

CONSENT-TO-SEARCH PROGRAM: THE PROBLEM-SOLVING PHASE

Lt. Joseph Richardson...recalls attending a meeting in late 1993 at which a woman complained about a house where children played with guns while the mother was away. When police arrived, the children ran into the house. "There was nothing we could do," said Richardson, now an aide to Chief Clarence Harmon. "There was no legal way to get in, and there wasn't enough information to obtain a search warrant." The woman at the meeting then asked a single question that changed everything. "Why don't you just knock on the door and ask that mother if you can search the house?" Richardson realized the woman was right. "I could think of no logical reason why I couldn't ask to search," he recalls. Thus was born the consent-to-search program (Bryan, 1995).

The St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department's Firearm Suppression Program (FSP), which sought parental consent to search for and seize guns from juveniles, received extensive national attention for its creative and controversial approach to reducing youth firearm violence.

The FSP was operated initially by the police department's Mobile Reserve Unit, a squad without a specific geographic assignment that responds to pockets of crime and violence throughout the city. Mobile Reserve officers enjoy a reputation as being among the most aggressive officers on the force, and assignment to Mobile is viewed as recognition that an officer is a go-getter.

"Consent to Search and Seize" emerged from a 1993 proposal for a comprehensive Firearm Suppression Program by the Mobile Reserve Captain. The program was to review Sheriff's records of firearm transactions to look for straw purchasers and gun dealers who may be dumping large numbers of firearms into the illegal firearms markets. Secondly, the FSP would trace all firearms confiscated by the police consequent to an arrest. The Police department, the Sheriff's department, the Circuit Attorney and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms were to jointly carry out this effort. The tracing proposal predated by several years the massive ATF youth crime gun-tracing initiative (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, 2000).

The final component of the proposed FSP was a post-arrest home visitation and notification project for minors. Consistent with its problem-solving orientation and dependence on citizen input, this aspect of the FSP emerged from a neighborhood meeting where a resident, quoted above, informed a police officer that there was a house in her neighborhood where children played with guns while their mother was away. This meeting led to the Consent-to-Search Program, in which the police notified parents in the case of juvenile firearm arrests, provided referrals to counseling services, and offered to do a consensual search of the residence to identify and confiscate any other illegal firearms possessed by the juvenile. The two keys to the success of the consent-to-search program were the ability to gain parental consent to conduct

searches and the ability to offer the parents the promise that they would not face prosecution for the fruits of such searches.

The FSP¹ was implemented in late 1993. An FSP case was initiated by citizen requests for service, reports received from other police units, or information from other investigations regarding the presence of firearms at a residence. Two officers, one of them one of two Mobile Reserve sergeants who went on all consent-searches, visited the residence in question, spoke with an adult resident, and requested permission to search the home for illegal weapons. An innovative feature of the program was the use of a "Consent to Search and Seize" form to secure legal access to the residence (see Appendix A). Residents were assured that the purpose of the program was to confiscate illegal firearms, particularly those possessed by juveniles, without seeking criminal prosecution. They were informed that by providing written consent to search, they would not be charged with illegal possession of a firearm.

The FSP generated little criticism from those persons most immediately affected by it: citizens who granted or refused permission to allow police officers to search their homes and seize illegal firearms. Anecdotal evidence indicates strong support for the program -- especially among adults -- in neighborhoods experiencing high levels of gun violence. One parent offered to sign several pre-dated forms so that the police could return at any time; another wanted to give the police a key to her house so that they could search while she was at work. Officers involved with the FSP attributed its early success to its "low-key approach." "We don't go in like storm troopers," according to one. "We realize this concept makes people like the ACLU leery, so we want to avoid complaints. Using a soft approach is why the program has worked. We don't intimidate anyone" (Bryan, 1995).

A key issue that emerged from the onset of program was its constitutionality. The FSP attracted criticism from representatives of the local ACLU, who questioned the very possibility of granting genuine consent to search a home when the police are standing at the door. Other critics charged that the program used warrantless searches as part of a general firearm confiscation effort that deprived citizens of their right to protect themselves against crime. The issues raised by the critics are not without merit. The mere request by the police for consent to search a home may contain, in the words of one FSP critic, a "built-in intimidation factor" (Bryan, 1995). Interestingly, the issue of the legality of the consent form that the police asked parents to sign was not contested.

There are court precedents to support the consent-to-search program. The Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution provides important protections to the privacy and security of individuals in their homes. The general rule is that if a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy in the property the government must obtain a warrant before conducting the search. However, the courts have consistently ruled that the property of juveniles can be searched with the consent of their parents or guardians. The state must prove that the necessary consent was obtained and that it was freely and voluntarily given. Although the United States Supreme Court has never expressly addressed the question of whether a parent or guardian can provide the necessary consent to authorize a search of a juvenile's property or living space, the Court has addressed the issue of third-party consent in other contexts. In general, the Court has found in favor of the police in attempting to initiate such searches.

What were the results of this carefully conceived program in 1994, its first full year of operation? A number of critical markers for success come to mind, including citizen

¹ Hereafter, we use "FSP" or "consent-to-search" interchangeably in reference to the consent-to-
Footnote continues on next page

cooperation, the ability to target locations that were likely to yield guns, and confiscating a large number of weapons. As far as the first criterion is concerned, the police reported that 98% of citizens who were approached consented to a search of their premises. This level of cooperation, or from a different vantage point compliance, is quite remarkable given the historic levels of distrust between the police and the African-American community in St. Louis. The second and third markers also were met successfully. In 1994, Mobile Reserve conducted between five and thirty searches of homes each night the program was in operation. Guns were found in half of the homes that were searched, and on average three guns were seized per household. The consent searches netted a total of 402 guns from juveniles. That number is more than half of the guns the police confiscated from juveniles during the year. The first quarter of 1995 saw Mobile Reserve officers continue at the same pace--104 guns were seized in consent searches.

There were other indicators of program success. The consent-to-search program was nominated for the Goldstein Award, the prestigious recognition offered by the Police Executive Research Forum for innovative problem-solving efforts. In addition, one of the two sergeants who supervised the program testified to Congress regarding its success. All indications were that the program had been successfully implemented, merited further scrutiny, and perhaps replication. In October 1995, the National Institute of Justice funded an evaluation of the FSP.

EVALUATION PLAN

The prospects of the FSP provided important opportunities for evaluation. Any such evaluation should contain a detailed process evaluation of FSP procedures and purposes and an equally rigorous, if necessarily more limited, outcome evaluation of the effects of the program on youth firearm possession, personal security, and community safety.

search program. We did not evaluate the illegal purchaser or tracing components of the FSP.

Process Evaluation

The process evaluation should identify the attributes of individuals, program components, and community characteristics associated with: (1) a high level of citizen compliance with police requests to search for and seize firearms; (2) a high ratio of consensual compliance to coerced compliance; and (3) a high ratio of firearm confiscations to searches. In short, the manifest purposes of the FSP were to seize as many illegal firearms as possible with as little coercion as possible. It is unlikely that these purposes can be fulfilled maximally without some trade-offs among them. For example, the 90% compliance rate reported by Mobile Reserve officers might have resulted from an unacceptably high level of coercion by officers or by citizens' misunderstanding of their right to refuse permission to search. However, given their insistence on using a "soft approach" to minimize citizen complaints and obvious commitment to the goals of the program, FSP officers during the first year were likely to view *any* degree of coercion or misunderstanding as unacceptable, because it may have jeopardized the success -- indeed, the existence -- of the program.

Outcome Evaluation

A full outcome evaluation of the FSP and similar interventions should have three objectives: (1) to determine whether the program results in a net reduction in firearm possession by young people; (2) to determine whether the confiscation of guns threatens the personal security of young people; and (3) to measure the program's influence on the level of community safety. Regarding the first two objectives, a key research issue is whether the FSP confiscation itself results in significant re-arming of program participants. To explore this possibility, juveniles whose homes have been searched by the police should be contacted and re-interviewed at periodic intervals regarding their "personal security," a term we use to describe an individual's

perceived risk for violence. As explained below, we had difficulty evaluating the effectiveness of the FSP in meeting objectives one and two, which obviated evaluating the program's impact on community safety.

EVALUATION REALITY

In the fall of 1995, when our evaluation of the FSP was to begin, the Chief of Police stepped down. He had supported innovations in the department and was regarded in policing and federal justice circles as a leader in police innovation. However, the Chief received criticism for several of his efforts to integrate community policing into the mainstream of departmental policies and activities, particularly from the Board of Police Commissioners. The Chief also had an embattled relationship with the mayor.² The new Chief assumed his job in January 1996 and initiated a series of transfers and consolidations across units. The Violent Crime Task Force was suspended, and the Lieutenant who proposed the FSP and the two supervising sergeants were transferred out of the unit. The consent-to-search program was suspended due to a "lack of success" according to the Lieutenant who was placed in charge of the Mobile Reserve unit. No records were kept for the second, third or fourth quarters of 1995 regarding program characteristics or output prior to its suspension in 1996.

During late winter and spring of 1996, a series of meetings were held between the lead evaluator on the NIJ project and the Commander of the division in which the Mobile Reserve Unit was housed. That Commander was unaware of the accomplishments of the consent searches, and had to be shown a newspaper article to be convinced that the claims regarding its success were real. When the evaluators approached the Chief with their NIJ project monitor the

² The Chief went on to run against the Mayor in the next election and won handily.

program was resumed "... only for the purposes of the evaluation, and to avoid embarrassment for the department."

Armed with this rather equivocal commitment from the Chief and the Deputy Chief with oversight of the Mobile Reserve, the evaluation of FSP finally began in the spring of 1996. The Mobile Reserve Unit had by then tripled in size from its 1994 levels, and few officers remained from the early days of the program. During calendar year 1996, the evaluation staff conducted 24 ride-alongs, including the observation of roll calls. Twelve interviews were conducted with key FSP personnel, including the former Chief, current Chief, current and former Lieutenant, Sergeants, Circuit Attorney (Prosecutor), and Legal Adviser to the Police Department. Six interviews were conducted with a parent and child whose residence had been searched. Finally, all Mobile Reserve activity logs were reviewed and coded to determine program activity. These data form the basis of our assessment of the second stage in the life of the consent-to-search program.

CONSENT-TO-SEARCH AS CRIME SUPPRESSION

The consent-to-search program received less than whole-hearted support from members of the newly constituted Mobile Reserve Unit. No training was provided for officers to perform consent searches, a sergeant no longer accompanied officers on each consent request, and many officers in the unit were unaware that such a program even existed. The "consent form" to be signed by the officer conducting the search was altered drastically, and the pledge of no prosecution was removed. During the entire calendar year of 1997, the Mobile Reserve unit completed 27 consent searches, two percent of all mobilizations. This number is less than five percent of the number of consent searches during the program's problem-solving phase in 1994. Consent searches yielded a total of 31 firearms, about eight percent of the 1994 reported total.

The modal categories of mobilizations for the Mobile Reserve Unit in 1997 were vehicle stops (30%) and search warrants (31%). Pedestrian checks comprised an additional 23% of the mobilizations. These activities produced a total of 468 confiscated firearms, only fifteen percent more than consent searches from juveniles alone netted in 1994. In 1997, not a single consent search was conducted at the residence of a juvenile, the formal targets of the program. All consent searches were conducted on individuals between the ages of 18 and 34. Sixteen of the 27 consent searches (59%) resulted in an arrest. Cash was seized in five of the 27 searches. Clearly, confiscating guns from juveniles was no longer a goal of the FSP, consent searches were no longer the preferred means of obtaining guns, and arrest had become the modal outcome. The department had abandoned problem solving in favor of a traditional suppression strategy, and the problem of juvenile firearm possession was no longer a priority.

The program had fully subverted its primary goal of reducing the risk of juvenile firearm violence through consent searches. The program ceased to target guns and instead targeted individuals. Consent-to-search was relegated to a marginal role as more aggressive tactics – especially search warrants – received top priority. The new Lieutenant in charge of Mobile Reserve was straightforward in his explanation of the shift in philosophy: “Why only get a gun with a consent search, when you can get a gun and a criminal with an arrest or search warrant.” The change in philosophy reflected a return to the fundamental police culture of suppression and reliance on traditional crime-control strategies that had long dominated in the department.

Where did the FSP go? What could account for the abrupt termination of a program nominated for national honors and presented to a congressional hearing? The answers to these questions provide several insights into the organizational processes through which law-enforcement innovations are implemented and sustained.

No Institutional Memory

One key to the sustainability of innovation and eventual institutionalization of problem-solving innovations such as the FSP is the development of a formal institutional memory of such efforts. Within three years of its implementation, the department retained no institutional memory of the initial consent-to-search program. All records of the first phase of the program were kept by one Mobile Reserve Sergeant. No entry was made in the confiscated firearms logs regarding the method of confiscation which could be used to document the effectiveness of consent searches compared with other confiscation methods. Thus when confronted with stories regarding the success of the program, officers could legitimately question their veracity, because routine departmental documentation of such efforts did not exist. The Sergeant who did track the program kept all of the records in cardboard boxes in his basement. Many of those records were destroyed when his basement flooded.

Subunit Isolation

In addition to the lack of an institutional memory, the isolated nature of the Mobile Reserve Unit also impeded the institutionalization of the program. The Unit is located in a nondescript building several miles from police headquarters and the nearest district station, and is also home to three-wheeled motorcycles and other mothballed equipment. The Major with oversight responsibility for Mobile Reserve and the Lieutenant who runs it also has a variety of other tasks. Like many other specialized divisions, this unit fulfills a special niche for the police department. The spatial and structural isolation of Mobile Reserve made it an ideal environment for the creation of organizational innovations such as the FSP while at the same time making it difficult to sustain or integrate those innovations within the mainstream of the department.

Lack of Training

The lack of formalized training for the program also hindered its continuance. Without a formal training manual, program description, and documentation of past achievements, it is nearly impossible for such innovations to diffuse throughout the police department. And the fact that officers within the Mobile Reserve Unit controlled whatever training that existed served to further insulate the program from the more routine in-service training and adoption by the department at large.

Rotation of Personnel

The change in personnel brought about by the naming of a new Chief also contributed to the demise of the program. The viability of programs that thrive in small, isolated units is difficult to sustain in organizations in which personnel change occurs regularly and at all levels. There are many good reasons for rotating personnel across different organizational tasks and units. Rotation itself is not the problem. However, without special efforts to preserve and diffuse innovative practices, the transfer of responsible personnel can lead to their disappearance. Rather than diffusing the innovation throughout the department by transferring Mobile Reserve officers to other Districts or tasks, the program was essentially terminated. An initiative that was able to thrive in a small, isolated environment failed to receive the support of command rank throughout the department and eventually vanished.

Lack of Commitment from Leadership

The lack of commitment to the program at command rank also contributed to the eventual demise of consent searches in St. Louis. The isolation of the program in a single, specialized unit kept other Captains and Lieutenants from buying in to the goals and methods of the program. The evaluation team was often told by command staff that consent-to-search "was not my program." It therefore fell through the organizational cracks when the program innovators

were transferred to other units in the department. A second and arguably more important reason command rank lacked commitment to the program was their belief that it was too soft on offenders. Comments from several officers indicated that, even if they could be convinced that consent-searches were an effective way of removing illegal guns from high-risk neighborhoods, they would still prefer the use of search warrants and arrests. They placed a higher priority on taking offenders rather than guns off the streets.

Command-rank officers had little commitment to the FSP, finally, because the department lacked a coherent problem-solving philosophy that might have lent credibility to such practices. According to the prevailing departmental philosophy consent-searches were an ineffective tool in dealing with offenders and therefore did not "make sense." The absence of a significant *organizational* commitment to either problem-solving or community policing ultimately spelled the demise of the consent program.

External Support

Had the community or neighborhood groups been strongly committed to the goals and methods of the consent-to-search program, it might have survived. Here again, the isolation of the program in a small unit that ranged across the entire city mitigated against the development of a local, non-law enforcement constituency. Such constituencies are best developed through sustained contact between the same officers and citizens. For structural reasons, Mobile Reserve lacked such a relationship.

The FSP did have external support. It was "saved" with the intervention of the project monitor from the National Institute of Justice. The importance of that support should not be discounted. A federal presence is often crucial to keep local programs on track and local staff cooperating with each other. However, support from Washington also served to reinforce the

view of the FSP as an external imposition, with which for reasons of professional courtesy the department might cooperate, but without enthusiasm or commitment. The lesson of the FSP is that federal support is often necessary for starting or sustaining local initiatives, but rarely sufficient.

One of the ironies of the evolution of this innovation is that it came to be identified with members of the evaluation staff. Many officers referred to the FSP as a "university program." In fact, during its second phase in the mid-1990s, the only spokespersons for this nationally known problem-solving initiative were the evaluators, who made presentations about it at professional conferences, and NIJ officials, who deemed it one of a select few "demonstration projects" with national significance. When police officials in other cities heard about the program and contacted the police department for information, they were routinely referred to the evaluators for guidance in implementing consent searches or developing training.

But perhaps the greatest irony in the life of the St. Louis consent-to-search program is that it resurfaced. With the backing of the US Attorney for Eastern Missouri, St. Louis adopted a version of Boston's Ceasefire program. As a consequence of the desire to replicate the success of the Boston effort in St. Louis, the local group has endorsed consent searches, developed a protocol for conducting such searches, and initiated training to support district officers in their efforts to remove guns from juveniles. Perhaps the presence of a powerful external constituency – in this case the US Attorney – combined with department-wide support for consent searches can successfully integrate such innovations into the routine activities of local policing. The addition of a community group with stakes in the success of the program completed the advocacy network necessary to sustain the innovation.

CONSENT-TO-SEARCH AS COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

The third phase of the consent-to-search program emerged in late 1998. By this time, the second version of the program had been dislodged from the institutional memory of the police department, a process hastened by the lack of fidelity between program goals and departmental priorities, the location of the program in a specialized unit, and more personnel changes. The program appears to have re-emerged for a number of reasons. First, there was pressure from the US Attorney's office. The USA was an activist who was prone to ask with reference to promising crime-prevention efforts, "Why can't we do that in St. Louis?" He heard about the consent-to-search program at a national conference and returned to St. Louis only to find that the idea had develop here years before. In addition to the influence of the USA, funds were available to pay overtime specifically for conducting consent searches. Finally, continued national and local attention to youth firearm violence, even in the midst of declining rates of violent crime, kept pressure on the police department to do something about the presence of guns in the hands of juveniles.

The third phase of the program was housed in the Intelligence Unit of the department. Importantly, this unit is located in the headquarters building with direct daily access to the Chief through briefings. The program was run by the two sergeants directly responsible for the initial program. This link to the program's history lent credibility to the new initiative because it did not appear to have sprung "from nowhere." This time the program was funded by monies from the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant (LLEBG). This additional element was important because it elevated the need for credibility and accountability in the program. The fact that federal funds were used to pay officer overtime to conduct the consent searches meant that a system for reporting activity had to be developed.

The funding mechanism was important for additional reasons. Because the consent-to-search program was funded for overtime, the Intelligence Unit could hand pick the officers to participate in the program. The two sergeants chose colleagues in the Intelligence Unit, most of whom had served with them in Mobile Reserve during the first phase of the program. Not only were these officers familiar with the goals and techniques of consent searches, they were committed to the policy, an element sorely lacking in the second phase. The consensus about program goals and cohesiveness among officers of the Intelligence Unit, who by day served search warrants and assisted on high-profile arrests, helped sustain the program.

The presence of federal funds also brought the attention of the US Attorney and the Law Enforcement Coordinator (LEC) in the US Attorney's office. The USA was quite active in local law enforcement and a visible participant in the city's Ceasefire program. He was instrumental in the rebirth of consent searches in St. Louis, touting their earlier success to the Chief and using his leverage to insure that the program returned in a fashion consistent with its original operation. The LEC worked closely with the Sergeant who was the police department's designated grant and POP coordinator. This Sergeant also had a role in the Intelligence Unit throughout the operation of the consent-search program, which provided an external control, or at least the symbolic presence of external control, as well as a formal reporting mechanism to the USA.

The program operated differently from both of the earlier versions in many respects. First, officers were trained. The training took place at roll call before consent patrols were conducted and consisted of a discussion of legal issues, tactics, and goals of the program. Second, there was an effort to document program activities. Finally, a community referral component was added to the program.

Our interviews with officers on patrol and in the squad room revealed that many officers saw removing guns from juveniles as having only limited value. Most officers assumed that adolescents could gain possession of illegal firearms quickly and easily, and therefore believed that the modest crime-reduction effects of weapon seizure needed to be complemented with other interventions. The additional input was to come from a community partner known as the African-American Churches in Dialogue (AACID). This group of ministers was to be available for referrals from the Intelligence Unit, from parents desiring guidance, and to youth needing job readiness and placement programs. The partnership had a rocky beginning. During an initial meeting it was evident that considerable distrust existed between the ministers and the police. When one of the sergeants coordinating the program explained that they would gain consent of the parents to search their residence for firearms, one of the ministers asked how they could be sure that the police would not steal from the residents. The question caused understandable unease on the part of the police officers present. The sergeant asked in return how the police could be sure that the ministers would not try to have sex with the young boys referred to them. After a moment of stunned silence, the meeting broke out in laughter and the consent-search community partnership was formed.

An additional departure from the original program was the selection of targets. The research team tried, to no avail, to concentrate the consent searches and referral activity in a few high-crime neighborhoods, employing similar neighborhoods as controls. Otherwise, we argued, the impact of the program on firearm violence would be diluted and difficult to measure. However, the police preferred a problem-solving approach that focused on high-risk youths rather than high-risk areas. They developed target addresses based on information gathered in the course of their daily activities as officers in an Intelligence Unit. They were more

comfortable with this method of target selection because it conformed to the basic requirement of their job, which was to develop information to be used in investigations. A second source of information came from Gang Unit referrals. Intelligence and the Gang unit worked in close harmony on a number of ongoing investigations, and several of the Intelligence officers were formerly members of the Gang Unit. A third source of addresses for conducting consent searches came from computerized record checks of all known drug violations and first-degree assaults involving juveniles. Finally, the Police Information Record System (PIRS) was checked for arrests of juveniles in known gang or high-crime areas. Generating such lists added an aspect of accountability to the process as well. The addresses were reviewed at the evening briefing before each consent patrol was sent out on the street so that other officers could add information regarding the juvenile, his associates, siblings, or parents. When an officer had specific knowledge of a juvenile or his family they were likely to be assigned the case.

The briefing before each shift was a significant part of the third phase. In addition to discussing address targets, referral processes were considered, and general tactics were conveyed from veteran officers to those new to the unit. The briefing generally took between ten and forty-five minutes depending on the length of the list, the events of the preceding evening, and specific concerns relayed by the sergeants. Officers took additional time to run record checks on the juveniles at the targets they were assigned to determine whether they had a record, were wanted, or whether a Field Interrogation (FI) card had been filled out for them earlier. Between three and five cars were sent out each night, each staffed with two officers. One sergeant was generally designated as a "home base" contact, and maintained radio contact and completed paperwork. The other sergeant typically rode solo, serving as backup to other officers. A shift

began at 6 PM and was generally concluded by 10 PM. The consent-to-search program generally ran four nights per week, although this was variable.

A Troubled Partnership

The hallmark of the third phase of consent-to-search was the inclusion of the referral process. This underscores the fundamental problem of the intervention throughout its history, the inability of the police to recruit and attract another constituent to support for their actions.

The relationship between the police and the clergy group reveals several of the tensions that can emerge in partnerships between law enforcement and community organizations during problem-solving experiments. The initial meeting between officers involved in the consent-to-search process and the clergy group, although contentious, concluded positively. Officers generally believed that clergy would follow up on referrals and provide meaningful assistance to families and their children. Many officers told us that religious leaders were part of one of the few remaining institutions in high-crime neighborhoods, and among the few advocates for high-risk youth. The lead sergeant developed a form to be used by officers in making referrals to the clergy group. The forms were in triplicate, with one copy going to the parent of the juvenile, one kept by the officer, and one forwarded to the head of the clergy group. The officers seemed genuinely relieved to have somewhere else to refer parents. On more than one occasion the research team observed mothers crying and asking the police for assistance. These mothers were clearly overwhelmed by their children and desperate for help. The police officers did not feel well equipped to address problems of this kind and the referral process gave them a way to respond to people in need.

The officers shared the common belief that the church, the African-American church in particular, is a natural resource for meeting the needs of families in crisis. The reality was quite

different. It became evident within the first month of the referral process that there was virtually no follow-up on the part of the clergy. The breakdown of the referral process created a dilemma for some officers and fueled the cynicism that others held toward police involvement in this form of intervention. An example illustrates the dilemma. One night a member of our research team rode with a two-officer car assigned to find juveniles eligible for job training and placement and make referrals to the clergy group for such programs. It was a frustrating evening for the officers, whose presence at basketball games, recreation centers and street corners either sent youths scrambling to hide or raised suspicion about their activities. The officers finally pulled up to a basketball court where 25-30 youths were playing basketball or watching. One officer took out a notepad and announced that he was making referrals to a job program, and wanted names, phone numbers and addresses. Although there were more skeptics than believers, a number of men in their twenties came forward to give their names. The officers were clearly uncomfortable throughout this process, yet they completed the task dutifully. They submitted the names to the clergy group but later learned that no action was taken. The evaluation team was unable to document a single job placement or clergy contact from the referral process.

The absence of follow-up on the part of the clergy frustrated the efforts of the officers and, if typical of community partnerships, threatens the viability of problem-solving initiatives such as the consent-to-search program. However, it is not clear whether the police in this instance happened to team up with the wrong clergy group or whether the clergy in general are ill-suited for the task they were asked to perform. In distressed communities, the church has come to be regarded as a social service agency of last resort. But why should ministers be any more able or willing than police officers to perform job placement for disadvantaged youth?

One implication of our evaluation is the need to rethink the function of community partnerships in problem-solving initiatives and the role of the clergy in them.

EVALUATING PHASE THREE

We now examine several process and outcome measures of the revised consent-to-search program. These measures are taken from program information compiled by the officers and the research team.

Outcome indicators

A total of 201 consent searches were conducted during a nine-month period between December, 1998 and August of 1999. The targets of these searches were developed from law enforcement data. A hallmark of the first phase of the program was its reliance on community input and referrals as a major source of target addresses for consent searches. In contrast, the third version of the program relied primarily on PIRS, an internal police data source, for target selection. Fifty-one percent of all residences where consent searches were conducted came from a review of police files. The second most likely source was the gang unit, which accounted for 27% of the targets. Eighteen percent of residences where searches took place came from drug statute violations gleaned from police reports.

The source of information for referrals signals the locus of control of the program and the extent to which citizen input is used to drive police interventions. Phase three of the consent-to-search program was heavily police-driven. That may account for a much lower level of compliance by parents or guardians than was reported for the first version of the program. In 99 of the 201 cases (49%) the police were did not obtain consent by the parent or guardian of the juvenile in question. Forty-two percent of parents granted consent to search. In 6% of the "consent" cases a warrant was served (the remainder of the cases were missing). These results

confirm the conclusion that police sources are less likely to yield consent than are community referrals. It is not surprising that when parents request the police to come to their residence they are more likely to grant the police entry to the residence. As the direction of the program changed and the police assumed greater responsibility, it is not surprising that they would encounter more refusals from residents.

Eighty-five households were searched for firearms during the nine-month observation period, and a total of twenty-nine firearms were recovered. One of the cases resulted in the seizure of an assault weapon, a Chinese SKS rifle. Three caches of ammunition also were confiscated. In the aggregate, these results are less impressive than those reported for the first consent-to-search program, regardless of the denominator used to gauge the effectiveness of the searches in obtaining guns.

In 101 cases, or roughly half of all contacts, a referral to the clergy group was made. The remainder of cases either refused a referral or were not offered such an option. As noted above, the police were unaware of a single case in which the clergy responded to a referral made as part of this program.

Despite the lower compliance rate, the small number of firearms seized, and the lack of follow-up to the referrals, this group of officers characterized the program as a success. How were the officers able to judge their efforts as successful, especially when evaluated against the earlier standards? To some degree organizational inertia produces workgroup views that define any organizational effort as successful, regardless of the outcome measure. Yet these were veteran officers, wise enough to know that a few gun seizures would not noticeably reduce firearm violence. Overtime pay was certainly an attractive feature of program for the officers involved and contributed to their enthusiastic participation. But the main reason the officers

viewed their problem-solving endeavor as successful is that they never expected it to reduce youth violence. The interviews revealed a more symbolic goal for the program. Their dutiful participation affirmed the officers' commitment to creating a safer community for youth. This view is illustrated by the officer who said that the police were not as concerned with the target of the consent search--the guns--as they were with the message sent to the parents and guardians in the community. This view of program purpose and outcome is elaborated below in the results of our process evaluation.

Program Process

In this section we report the observations of the research team as we conducted ride-alongs, interviewed officers, and observed officer-citizen and officer-officer interactions.

Deployment. In general, the Lieutenant in charge of the Intelligence Division and the two unit sergeants worked in separate offices away from the squad room. Their primary function in the squad room was to form teams of two-to-three officers for the night, make assignments of addresses, suggest trouble spots, and maintain radio supervision of the unit during its activities. Within each car, one officer was designated as the lead and the other(s) as backup. The lead officer approached the house, explained the program, and conducted the search, while the backup officer(s) provided surveillance of residents.

Negotiating consent. The approaches used by officers at the door of residences varied little from case to case. The officer indicated that the Chief of Police initiated the program owing to his concern with youth violence and desire to take illegal guns away from juveniles. The officers explained that there would be no legal consequences from the search and that they would provide referrals for parents or youth who desired them. The approach combined a mixture of helpful concern with assertive control of the situation. Officers did not want doors

slammed on their faces and typically made a subtle move into the doorjamb, creating a presence in the house. But they always *requested* permission to enter the residence.

Family reactions. It is difficult to characterize family reactions to the request to conduct consent searches. Officers were unable to search roughly half of the targeted residences, but that category included a large number of residences where parents could not be found or where no one was home. Our results may therefore underestimate the fraction of parents who may have permitted searches. Where parents were present, however, we observed a high level of cooperation. Faced with several police officers and an independent observer, permitting the police to enter the home may have seemed the most prudent course of action. The officers were trained to approach citizens with civility and deal with them in a respectful manner. Those who adopted an informal, collaborative approach were more likely than those who were more formal and directive to obtain cooperation and gain entrance to the residence.

For their part, most parents appeared to respect the authority of the law enforcement officers who approached them. We saw little evidence of tension or conflict at the door step. That may have been due to the level of training and esprit among the officers, but it also reflects the evident concern of the parents for the safety and well-being of their children. The very presence of the police seemed to indicate to many parents that a problem existed and they ought to cooperate to resolve it.

Officers' views. During ride-alongs, we consistently put the question of effectiveness to officers. We wanted to know if they believed that the consent-to-search program was an effective vehicle for removing guns from juveniles and reducing violence. Few officers expressed the belief that the program would lead to lower levels of violence among juveniles. Officers assumed that guns seized from youth at high risk for violent victimization or offending

could be replaced without much difficulty. A small number of officers acknowledged that it was possible that the program could reduce youth violence if they got the "right" guns at the "right" time. But they viewed that prospect as a long shot given the large pool of available firearms.

Even though most officers did not believe that the program would a substantial impact on access to firearms or youth firearm violence, they saw value in the program for several other reasons. First, they valued the referral component of the program. A frustration of many officers was their inability to address underlying conditions that, they assumed, social service personnel or clergy could remedy. Second, a source of value for many officers was the ability to use problem-solving techniques to address youth violence and other issues. Officers provided a variety of referrals for non-law enforcement problems, including housing-code violations, school problems, and unemployment. Third, officers viewed the opportunity to gather intelligence as an important function of the program. The ability to enter houses provided a different view of many of the subjects of the consent program than may otherwise have been available to officers.

Finally, some officers expressed the hope that residents would begin to see officers in a different light; rather than viewing the police as opponents, they hoped citizens would see them more as partners. We have no objective measure of the extent to which this did happen. We suspect that changes in perception did occur in rather limited circumstances. Many parents who were skeptical at the doorstep were cooperative by the end of the search process. It is unlikely that the consent-to-search program measurably changed the views of city residents regarding their police department -- not all interactions were positive, and there were too few to have much impact overall -- but as part of a larger strategy to promote citizen cooperation in problem solving, this program appears to have promise.

One of the ongoing issues throughout the history of the consent-to-search program was whether it constituted "real police work." During the second phase of the program, neither commanding officers nor rank-and-file in Mobile Reserve were committed to the policy and believed it detracted from more relevant police functions. The same problem did not exist in the third phase given how officers were selected for the program and how it was funded. The debate over whether making arrests and serving warrants would have been a better use of time was hardly contested among the officers hand-picked to conduct the consent-to-search program. They were chosen for participation owing to their commitment to the principles of the program and community-oriented policing. Moreover, when questioned about this officers responded that because the program was conducted on an overtime basis it did not take time away from other police functions. As the program was funded, it was an addition to the repertoire of police responses rather than a replacement for some other function. And since most of the officers in the program worked in the Intelligence Unit during the day, serving warrants and arresting high-profile offenders, they had their share of "real" police work. One officer summarized the views of many others when he told us that real police work can take a variety of forms.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

This report has traced the development of an innovative problem-solving initiative, the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department's Firearm Suppression Program. The program as originally conceived was broad in nature, emphasizing firearm traces, supply interruption, and juvenile access. The program remained housed within a specialized unit in the department during each of its three phases, moving from Mobile Reserve to Intelligence in the third phase. Our evaluation also has gone through several phases. We began with the intention of evaluating the impact of the consent-to-search program on youth violence and the ability of the police to

confiscate firearms from juveniles. The study took quite a different direction, as the program changed in the hands of a new administration and programmatic leadership. In its earliest stage, consent-to-search was a police problem-solving tool, part of a larger intervention, and directed at one of the city's most serious crime problems. A large number of guns were seized, the product of a relatively efficient number of searches, and a very high degree of citizen cooperation was achieved.

The original FSP reflected the commitment of the local police, or more precisely individuals within the department, to problem-oriented policing. The program responds to -- indeed was originated as a consequence of -- problems identified by citizens. By drawing citizens into the process of identifying and confiscating illegal firearms, officers rely on community expertise, a central tenet of problem-oriented approaches (Goldstein, 1991; Goldstein, 1993). The FSP also can be viewed as an interesting variant of both "aggressive order maintenance" and deterrence strategies (Kelling, 1987; Kennedy, 1998). The intent was to send a signal that juvenile firearm possession poses individuals risks and threatens public order and will not be tolerated by the police or the broader community. The success of such an effort depends heavily on the quality of the interactions between community members and law enforcement officers.

But the program changed dramatically. It became another instrument to gain access to citizens' residences that more closely resembled the use of search warrants. Consent searches were used rarely, and seldom applied in a manner consistent with the program's design. In its third phase, the program recovered some of the features of initial conception. Even so, fewer parents consented and fewer guns were confiscated. Referrals were offered to interested parents, but there is little evidence of follow through on the part of the referral services.

The three versions of the program are summarized in Table 1. Comparing across the columns of the table highlights the contrasts in the three phases. Phase I of the program clearly incorporated more community input into the front end, the referral process, which led to higher rates of cooperation and gun seizure. The significant role played by citizens seems to have contributed to the success of the initial program. But citizen input alone, without an organized constituency, is unlikely to produce a sustainable program. The lack of a viable constituency combined with scant efforts at institutionalization created conditions whereby a leadership change within the department could lead to the rapid demise of the program. The activities of the "consent" program in Phase II were unequivocally suppression and crime-control oriented. Arrests, search warrants, and intelligence usurped the original goals of the program. It would have been hard to design a set of outcomes and processes more diametrically opposed to those of the initial program. However, it is not unexpected that a police department would return to the philosophy and tactics that have formed the backbone of law-enforcement activity for over six decades. Such a reversion to form is hastened if when an innovation lacks an institutional memory and fails to provide for routine implementation.

Phase III is deemed the "community mobilization" phase of the program because citizen input regains importance, and a clergy group stepped up to provide services to youths and their parents. Despite these positive features of the program, it did not match the achievements in Phase I. The level of consent from parents was reduced, and only a small fraction of searches netted a firearm. In some ways these achievements seem more realistic than those of Phase I. Perhaps these levels of consent and firearm seizure reflect the effects of a program that functioned according to established guidelines, with some training, regular oversight, in which the great majority of contacts were "cold" (i.e., came from police records), rather than self-

initiated. In addition, officers who participated in both Phase I and III admitted that they were less aggressive in the latter phase of the project.

What is one to make of the transition of the FSP from problem solving to crime control to community mobilization? An elementary but important observation is that programs change, both in the process of moving from the drawing board to practice (implementation) as well as over the course of their life (institutionalization). This is especially true in a dynamic environment like a police department, subject to external and internal pressures. Despite the intuitive sense such a program made for a city with very high rates of youth violence, consent-to-search could not be sustained for a number of reasons, including:

- lack of institutional memory
- isolation of the program from the department mainstream
- lack of specific training in program application
- lack of commitment from command rank personnel
- lack of department-wide commitment to problem solving.
- lack of a constituency for the program

The major points bear reiterating here. The leadership turnover within the department and the unit responsible for the program certainly contributed to its drift and demise. The failure to create conditions necessary for institutionalization also contributed to the overall drift of the program. Such conditions include training, outcome measures, records of program operation and achievements, and constituent building both within and outside the department. Innovative programs can only thrive in environments where they find broad-based support and a platform to build from.

These conclusions have more global implications. The problems enumerated here apply in a general way to the implementation of most organizational innovations. Yet they are especially significant for community policing as it tries to gain a toehold in the culture of policing and the repertoire of institutional responses to crime. Sadd and Grinc (1996) report in an eight-city study of community-policing innovations that constituency development, lack of support from community residents, and officer resistance are the main impediments to the implementation and long-term institutionalization of community policing efforts.

Problem-solving innovations need constituents within an organization to survive. Those constituents must have sufficient organizational prestige and power to protect the innovation during times when it is confronted by internal and external challenges. Such constituencies are not likely to be effective if they are developed *after* the innovation is devised. Rather, they should have already formed and, ideally, directed the problem-solving process out of which the innovation emerged.

As critical as internal constituencies are to sustain innovations, active external constituencies are even more important. Innovations that are intended to have an impact on external conditions, which is nearly always the case for problem-solving initiatives, require the participation and cooperation of external groups. In addition, such constituent groups must be willing and able to work with law enforcement. Such relationships are difficult to build in high-crime communities where suspicion and tensions between residents and the police can run high. In its initial formulation, the consent-to-search program depended on city residents and organizations (block groups, neighborhood watch, clergy, schools) to provide referrals. In spite of the large number of referrals that came from these sources, none of these groups became active participants in the program, in the form of an Advisory Board or support group. Nor were

external constituencies within the law enforcement community developed. The US Attorney was not aware of the program, the local ATF office was not a participant, and the program lacked significant incorporation into the fabric of criminal justice, crime control and delinquency prevention. When the program was threatened, therefore, there was no support for its continuance.

The toughest impediment to sustaining problem-solving initiatives such as the FSP, however, is officer resistance. Mobile Reserve officers believed that the success of the program in Phase I depended on their scrupulous adherence to the promise made in the consent form. Several officers reported that they were willing to "bite on" (ignore) evidence of all but the most serious crimes in return for access to the homes of juveniles with firearms. Arrest opportunities that result from gaining entry to a house via the FSP are, in this view, worth trading for the chance to get guns out of kids' hands. A distinctive organizational culture is required to encourage and sustain such attitudes among police officers. Of particular importance are strong leadership and subunit autonomy, which help to insulate officers from the traditional norms and procedures of "real police work": making arrests, investigating crimes, pursuing offenders (Van Maanen, 1991). But, as we have seen, subunit autonomy comes at the price of isolation, so that when leadership changes innovative programs that go against the grain of dominant enforcement ideologies are easily "forgotten."

Even in departments that encourage problem-solving policing strategies, organizational support for a program like the FSP is inherently precarious. St. Louis did not have such a department. Leadership did not consider reducing juvenile firearm possession a top priority. Most did not define such activity as "law enforcement" at all, and some who did view it as an important and appropriate objective continued to favor more traditional approaches. Our

interviews with senior officers during Phase II revealed a strong preference for search warrants because they broaden access to suspects and their possessions and because they can remove *offenders* -- not just their weapons -- from the streets. These officers tended to view the FSP as a community-relations exercise with little impact on crime. Even in Phase III, the commitment of officers who had been handpicked and specially trained to perform consent searches had to be secured with overtime pay.

THE COMPARATIVE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF CONSENT SEARCHES

Consent searches are one among several police interventions to recover firearms and reduce gun violence. In Table 2 we list seven widely used strategies to recover firearms. They range from the most invasive, labor-intensive search warrant to campaigns that urge residents to turn in their guns without remuneration. We compare the strategies along several dimensions of risk, cost, and outcome. The table first considers the level of risk presented by each of the seven strategies. The targets of search warrants and arrests, for example, are individuals who present high levels of risk to the safety of officers involved in such operations. Because these two tactics are generally used to target high-risk offenders, almost by definition, they involve greater risk to officers than are less targeted approaches such as gun buybacks.

A second criterion for choosing an intervention designed to target guns is the probability of getting a gun. Interestingly, those efforts most likely to yield guns, search warrants and gun buybacks, are the most dangerous and least dangerous, respectively, of the seven interventions. Traffic and pedestrian stops are the least likely interventions to get guns, but each year they account for the majority of gun seizures in police departments. This apparent contradiction is important to explain. Each year the police in cities like St. Louis make thousands of contacts with citizens -- and potential offenders -- through routine traffic and pedestrian stops. While

most of these stops do not lead to arrests or the seizure of contraband such as illegal firearms or drugs, the sheer volume of such stops leads to more seizures through these methods than all other methods combined. Search warrants, gun buybacks, and gun turn-in campaigns have a very high "yield" in firearms, but they account for only a small fraction of the guns recovered by the police.

We next consider the likelihood that guns removed by each of these tactics will result in a net reduction in crime. Because search warrants and arrests are targeted specifically at offenders at risk for offending in the immediate future, they are most likely to reduce criminal activity in the near term. Arrests are affected and search warrants are executed largely because an offense has occurred or is about to be committed. The other tactics all identify a target less likely to be involved in crime at the time of arrest or in the near future. Traffic and pedestrian stops are initiated because of the belief (reasonable suspicion) on the part of an officer that an individual is in violation of traffic laws or has behaved in such a way as to generate suspicion on the part of an officer. Because only a small fraction of such stops eventuate in the seizure of a gun, the probability that such an action leads to a reduction in gun use is also quite small. Because they target individuals considered at risk for involvement in crime, either as victims or offenders, consent searches are likely to have a greater crime-reduction payoff than pedestrian or traffic stops. Gun buybacks and turn-in campaigns are least likely to reduce crime, because by their very nature such tactics are directed at the more or less law-abiding public.

There are two categories of cost to gun seizure efforts, one in the expenditure of resources, the other social. Serving a search warrant is a labor-intensive activity, typically involving several officers and resulting from a lengthy period of investigation. Arrests are not quite as labor intensive yet can involve a substantial expenditure of time. Pedestrian and traffic stops typically involve a medium commitment of police resources, involving as they most often

do a single patrol unit. Consent searches and gun buybacks both have medium financial costs. Consent searches require the efforts of a number of officers and buybacks offer an incentive, usually money, in return for guns that are turned in. Gun turn-in campaigns have low costs, typically only those associated with publicity for the program.

Calculating the costs of an intervention should not be limited to dollars. Each tactic carries with it a social cost as well. In the case of search warrants, arrests, and consent searches the potential social cost is medium. That is, these tactics create a moderate level of discomfort in the community owing to their invasive nature. Often that community discomfort can be offset by perceived crime-control benefits. Traffic and pedestrian stops are more or less routine for many communities. However, their social implications may be substantial. A major complaint regarding American law enforcement is the alleged use of racial profiling to stop minorities in proportions far greater than their representation in the population. While traffic and pedestrian stops may be routine, they can be the primary source of distrust of the police for many Americans.

Another means to assess law enforcement tactics in removing illegal guns is the immediacy of the effect on crime. Tactics that have an immediate effect on crime carry with them an intuitive appeal. Search warrants, arrests, and some kinds of traffic and pedestrian stops have this potential if officers are trained to look for firearms (Sherman et al., 1995).

Tactics that target a high-risk individual, such as someone stopped on the suspicion of their involvement in crime, should have more rapid crime-reduction effects than consent searches, which typically target individuals who are not at immediate risk for involvement in criminal activity. It is even less likely that an immediate benefit will be realized from removing guns from the public through such means as a buyback or turn-in campaign.

A final dimension for comparing these seven tactics is the necessity of the involvement of a collaborative partner. Activities that require a partner are more difficult to execute than those which the police can perform themselves. Only the consent-search and buyback tactics require the presence of a partner. The police can execute the other strategies without assistance from other groups.

This review suggests that each tactic has its own virtues in terms of crime reduction, probability of seizing firearms, risk to the police, and costs. Use of a single tactic is not likely to yield the greatest success in removing guns from those who possess them illegally or are likely to use them in crime. To be effective against firearm misuse and violence, the police should employ a mix of complementary responses. Because a search warrant requires verified belief about the presence of evidence, some guns that the police can not obtain with a search warrant may be accessible through consent searches, which require far less certainty about the contents of a residence. No single method employed in isolation from the others is likely to increase citizen safety from illegal firearms use. Tactics must be used in a coordinated manner, and the *entire range* of tactics must receive priority within a police department for maximum effectiveness.

Where in the inventory of innovations is the consent-to-search program best situated? Perhaps the best known of police problem-solving partnerships is the Boston Ceasefire program (Kennedy et al, 1996, 1998). The success of that intervention seems to hinge on the extent to which a broad array of constituents embrace the program, there is continuous review of data to assess the program progress, and the intervention is closely linked to the findings from that review. These characteristics of the Ceasefire program are not found in the consent-to-search effort. The inability to generate a constituency for the St. Louis program was one of the

conditions that ultimately led to its downfall. Yet the intervention contains enormous potential when considered as part of a broader repertoire of tools the police can use to reduce firearm violence. After all, hundreds of guns were seized under the auspices of consent to search, and the police made referrals to youth-serving agencies. We conclude that the consent-to-search program has appeal on *prima facie* grounds because it addresses the immediate nature of the youth violence program and involves police in street level problem-solving efforts. The challenge is to build and sustain internal and external support for this distinctive problem-solving tool as part of a broader community mobilization to reduce firearm violence.

Table 1. The Three Phases of the St. Louis Consent-to-Search Program

	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III
Orientation	Problem Solving Aggressive Order Maintenance	Crime Control Suppression	Community Policing Community Mobilization
Tools	Consent Searches	Search Warrants Arrests	Consent Searches Referrals
Referral Sources	Community Meetings	Police Intelligence	Police PIRS, Gang Unit, Intelligence
Objectives	Respond to Citizen Concerns Weapon seizure from juveniles Notification of parents Assist parents with referrals	Arrest Weapon seizure Intelligence Serve Warrants	Weapon seizure from juveniles Referrals Involve a Community Partner Parental Notification
Program Process	Home Visit Consent Requested	Warrant	Home Visit Consent Requested
Consent Received	98%	Not Applicable	42%
"Hit" Rate (% Searches netting a gun)	50%	Not Applicable	< 25%
Program Duration	18 months	Nine months	9 Months
Guns Seized	510	31	29
Community Partner	The "Community"	None	Clergy

Table 2. The Costs and Impact of Seven Gun Recovery Tactics.

	Level of risk of subject	Probability of getting a gun	Ease of getting gun	Crime reduction	\$ Cost	Social cost	Effect on crime	Collaboration required
Search warrants	High	High	High	High	High	Medium	Immediate	No
Arrests	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Immediate	No
Traffic stops	Medium/Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	?Low?	Immediate	No
Pedestrian stops	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	?Low?	Immediate	No
Consent search	Medium/Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	Long term	Yes
Gun buybacks	Low	High	High	Low	Medium	Low	Long term	Yes
Gun Turn-in campaigns	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Long term	No

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