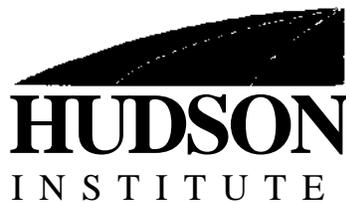




# Targeting Firearms Violence Through Directed Police Patrol

By Edmund F. McGarrell  
Steven Chermak, and Alexander Weiss

Crime Control Policy Center  
Hudson Institute



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a study of a directed police patrol initiative that was intended to reduce firearms crime. The report is particularly timely because of several public policy controversies that have emerged in the late 1990s. The first of these is gun control. In the wake of the Columbine High School murders, the nation has been engaged in a debate over the contentious issue of laws governing firearms sales and possession. Although this is not a study of gun control, the findings of the study should be considered in the public policy debate on gun control proposals.

The second controversial issue relates to the role of traffic enforcement in crime control. In the wake of high-profile cases such as the Louima and Diallo cases in New York City, and questions about racial profiling in traffic enforcement, the police find themselves under intense scrutiny for alleged targeting and harassment of African-American and other minority citizens. Again, although this research was not intended to focus on the issue of policing and race, the very subject of the investigation places the findings in the middle of these issues.

Additionally, this study informs a debate that has emerged given the reduction of crime in the United States during the 1990s. Specifically, *to what extent do the police influence the level of crime?*

For years academic criminologists insisted that there was little the police could do to reduce crime. If crime is the product of poverty, racial injustice, and inequality, then why would we expect police strategies to influence crime? These ideas have been challenged, perhaps most fervently by former New York City Police Commissioner William Bratton, who reoriented the police department toward strategic responses to crime patterns and the enforcement of disorder offenses. The dramatic declines in crime in New York City are offered as evidence of the crime control role the police can play.

### Background

In the early 1990s, the Kansas City Police Department conducted an experiment in which they tested the effect of directed police patrols in a high-violent-crime neighborhood. The directed patrol strategy utilized officers in patrol cars who were freed from the responsibility of responding to calls for police service. The officers were instructed to patrol the neighborhood proactively with a special emphasis on locating and seizing illegally possessed firearms. The results of the project were striking. The increased traffic enforcement led to a 65 percent increase in seizures of illegal firearms. This, in turn, was associated with a 49 percent decrease in gun-related crime in this area (Sherman, Shaw and Rogan, 1995; Sherman and Rogan, 1995). Building on the findings from Kansas City, the Indianapolis Police Department (IPD) implemented a similar project in July 1997 with the intent of reducing violent crime.

In contrast with Kansas City, the Indianapolis project was implemented in two target areas. In the east target area, a general deterrence strategy was employed. This involved maximizing the number of vehicle stops. In effect, any type of motor vehicle violation was likely to lead to a vehicle stop. In the north target area, a specific or targeted deterrence strategy was employed. This involved a more selective use of vehicle or pedestrian stops where the officer had a higher degree of suspicion of illegal behavior.

### Key Findings

- The absolute number of illegal firearms seizures was quite similar in the two target areas (forty-two in the north, forty-five in the east). For the east target area, however, this represented a greater increase in firearms seizures (a 50 percent increase) than was the case in the north target area (an 8 percent increase).
- Homicides dropped from eleven to one in the two target areas when comparing the project period to the same period of the prior year. Beyond this, the effects were isolated to one of the two target areas. Specifically, the north target area experienced significant reductions in firearms crime. In contrast, there was little evidence of a decline in firearms crime in the east target area.
- The results suggest that the specific deterrence or targeted offender strategy was more effective in reducing violent gun crime than was a more general deterrence approach. That is, focusing on individuals and situations where the police have some degree of suspicion of criminal behavior was more effective than casting a broad net over a neighborhood. It may be that the targeted offender approach sends a message of increased surveillance, and removes firearms from those individuals most likely to engage in violent crime.
- There was a high level of citizen awareness and support for IPD's directed patrol effort. The results were consistent for both target areas and for whites and blacks. Two-thirds to three-quarters of the sample expressed favorable opinions and high levels of support for IPD.
- Despite the large number of contacts between police and citizens, and the large number of citations and arrests, IPD officials reported that there were no reported citizen complaints tied to the directed patrol initiative.

### Implications and Issues

*These results indicate that directed patrol in high-violent-crime locations can have a significant effect on violent crime.* In Kansas City, firearms-related crime in the target area was reduced 49 percent. In the Indianapolis north district, overall firearms crime dropped 29 percent and both aggravated assaults with a gun and armed robbery dropped 40 percent. Given the concentration of firearms-related violent crime in certain geographic areas of urban centers, these types of reductions could have a significant impact on the nation's level of violent crime. Clearly, these findings are of importance to citizens who find themselves trapped in our highest crime neighborhoods.

Many interpreted the Kansas City results as suggesting that removing illegal weapons from a high-crime neighborhood may be a key strategy to reduce firearms-related crime. The contrast between the north and east districts suggests, however, that merely removing illegal firearms may not have been the sole causal agent. Rather, it may be that the focus on removing illegal firearms generates a targeted offender approach that increases surveillance on high-risk individuals in high-risk neighborhoods. *Both the Kansas City and Indianapolis north target area results indicate that aggressive proactive policing targeted at high-risk individuals in violent crime neighborhoods can generate significant reductions in violent crime.*

On the other hand, the results from the east target area reveal that we need to know much more about the most effective uses of directed patrol to reduce firearms-related crime. Further, in light of the east target experience, the positive results from the north target area and from Kansas City do not appear to be the automatic product of flooding a neighborhood with increased patrol. What is the optimal amount of time to employ such a strategy in a given neighborhood? What are the desired police saturation levels?

Consistent findings emerge from Kansas City and the present project in terms of the impact these projects had on citizen perceptions of the police. Both the Kansas City target area and the north target area occurred in predominantly African-American neighborhoods, involved aggressive patrol strategies, and received support by neighborhood residents. The effort was also supported in the predominantly white neighborhoods in the east target area. Given the history of police-citizen relationships in the African-American community, it is striking to find high levels of support by African Americans for an aggressive police strategy that can lead to significantly higher levels of vehicle stops by the police.

IPD district chiefs took the time to meet with neighborhood leaders and community groups and to secure their support before implementation. Directed patrol supervisors emphasized the need to treat citizens with respect and explained to citizens why they were being stopped. Our observations suggested that officers did act consistent with these instructions. Beyond these points, however, we need to know more about the training and tactics that can be used to ensure that this type of strategy is positively received by the community.

When these results are coupled with studies of field interrogation, the evaluation of Boston's youth gun crime initiative, New York Police Department's aggressive policing of illegal firearms possession and use, and Richmond, Virginia's Project Exile, they suggest that criminal justice action targeted at high-risk individuals in violent crime neighborhoods holds significant promise for reducing the level of firearms violence in the United States.

## INTRODUCTION

Many perceive the United States as having unusually high levels of crime. Yet this perception is only partially accurate. The violent crime rate, particularly murder, gun assault and armed robbery, is particularly high in the United States compared to other industrialized nations (Zimring and Hawkins, 1998). On the other hand, property crime rates are not unusually high in the U.S. Indeed, a recent comparison of crime in the U.S. and Great Britain found victimization rates for robbery, assault, burglary, and motor vehicle theft to be considerably higher in Great Britain (Langan and Farrington, 1998). Further, the trend in the two countries indicates increasing rates of crime in Great Britain and decreases in the United States. The exception to this pattern was for fire arms-related crimes. As noted above, homicides were much more common in the U.S. and over two-thirds of these were committed by a firearm. By contrast, only 7 percent of murders in Great Britain involved a firearm.

These international comparisons suggest that the most serious crime problem in the United States is firearms-related violent crime. Incidents like the Columbine High School murders and related school incidents put gun violence on the public and policymaker agenda. The immediate response seems to be to ask whether additional gun laws could prevent such incidents. This, of course, leads to contentious debates over the efficacy and constitutionality of gun-control laws. While these debates rage, however, a more immediate question is whether there are steps law enforcement can take to reduce the level of firearms violence under existing laws. This report presents the results of a study intended to address this question.

Another important point to keep in mind when discussing homicide and firearms violence is the fact that these crimes are heavily concentrated in our urban centers. Despite the heavily publicized school shootings in suburban and rural communities, most violent crime is concentrated in specific neighborhoods of large urban cities. Indeed, "over half of all homicides in the United States occur in just 66 cities, with one-quarter of homicides in only 8 cities" (Sherman et al., 1997). Thus, an important policy question is whether there are police strategies that can be employed in high-violent-crime neighborhoods in our urban cities to reduce violent crime.

This report presents the results of a particular police strategy, directed police patrol in high-violent-crime neighborhoods, designed to reduce firearms crime in Indianapolis. Directed patrol involves assigning officers to a particular area and freeing them from responding to calls for police service so they can engage in proactive investigation and enforcement of suspicious activities. The most common approach in a directed patrol effort is the use of traffic stops. The project was modeled after a similar effort employed in Kansas City that found significant reductions in gun crime. The Indianapolis project offered the opportunity to replicate the Kansas City findings as well as to test two somewhat different strategies of directed patrol.<sup>1</sup> The study also

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<sup>1</sup> Given the differences in target areas, program duration, implementation, and similar issues, the Indianapolis project cannot be considered a true "replication." For police administrators, however, the project represented an opportunity to take the promising results from Kansas City, modify the approach to meet local needs, and assess impact.

provided an opportunity to examine citizen perceptions of this type of police strategy.

In the pages that follow, we describe the Kansas City gun experiment. We then place the study in the context of research on related law enforcement strategies. Finally, we turn to the findings from the Indianapolis study.

## BACKGROUND

### Kansas City Gun Experiment

In the Kansas City experiment, directed police patrols worked a police beat with the highest levels of firearms violence in the city (Sherman, Shaw, and Rogan, 1995; Sherman and Rogan, 1995). For a six-month period, over 4,500 police hours were invested in the

*The traffic stop at which officers were trained to search for illegally possessed firearms was the most popular. The target beat witnessed a 65 percent increase in firearms seizures and nearly a 50 percent decrease in gun crime.*

area. The most frequent form of investigation was the traffic stop at which officers were trained to search for illegally possessed firearms. The target beat witnessed a 65 percent increase in firearms seizures and nearly a 50 percent decrease in gun crime. By contrast, a control beat experienced a slight decline in gun seizures and a small increase in gun crime.

Many have interpreted the Kansas City results as evidence that the removal of illegal firearms from a high-crime neighborhood will lead to reductions in violent gun crime. Yet the authors themselves cautioned that the study could not pinpoint the causal mechanism for the effect. It could result from an incapacitation effect whereby the removal of the illegal weapons reduced opportunities for gun crimes. In other words if the gun seizure was tied to arrest and prosecution it could produce an incapacitation effect by removing likely offenders from the community. It could also have a deterrent effect because the increased police presence and traffic stops changed the perceived likelihood of apprehension and punishment among would-be offenders. However, the single-site nature of the study precluded distinguishing among these plausible hypotheses.

Despite the lack of clarity about causation, the findings were striking given the magnitude of crime reduction. Further, the results gain credence when viewed in light of an accumulating body of research on police strategies aimed at high-crime locations.

### Random versus Directed Police Patrol

With the advent of the automobile, policing changed fairly dramatically. Foot patrol was largely replaced by motorized patrol. The dominant approach that emerged was a randomized car patrol based on the idea that the police could cover significant territory in their vehicles yet respond rapidly to local incidents. Additionally, the random patrol was predicted to have a deterrent effect because offenders would not know when a police car was likely to patrol any given area.

The effects of random patrol were tested in perhaps the most famous experiment in the criminal justice field. Known as the Kansas City randomized patrol study, this experiment involved systematically varying levels of car patrol in different neighborhoods of the city.

Some areas received large increases in car patrol, others retained traditional levels of car patrol, and others still saw car patrol eliminated. The findings were striking in that they suggested that none of the three conditions seemed to affect the level of crime in the neighborhood or the level of fear citizens experienced.

Similarly, studies of response time have failed to find that increased police response time has an effect on crime (see reviews in Sherman et al, 1997; Bayley, 1994). The primary problems are that most crimes are discovered after the fact, and even when there is contact between offender and victim there is usually a delay in the citizen's reporting of the crime that mitigates the benefits of rapid response.

By contrast, directed police patrol involves assigning officers to a particular area and freeing them from responding to calls for service so that they can engage in proactive investigation and enforcement of suspicious activities. Directed patrol is thought to be most promising as a crime control tool when it is targeted at high-crime locations and to hot spots of crime within high-crime locales (Sherman et al., 1997). Today, the most common form of directed patrol involves the use of traffic stops. Police patrolling high-crime areas can utilize traffic stops to create a visible police presence, detect illegal activities, and seize illegal weapons and drugs. The Kansas City gun experiment and the Indianapolis project are examples of this form of directed patrol. It should be noted, however, that directed patrol need not rely on motorized patrol. Foot and bicycle patrol, in particular, can be used in a directed patrol strategy.

***Given that much crime follows relatively stable patterns in terms of spatial and time distribution, a directed, as opposed to a random, approach to police patrol seems to offer strategic advantages.***

Many have interpreted the findings from the Kansas City random patrol experiment and from the studies of police response time as evidence that the police can do little to affect crime. For example, David Bayley, one of the country's foremost scholars on policing, opens his book on the future of policing by stating: "The police do not prevent crime. This is one of the best kept secrets of modern life. Experts know it, the police know it, but the public does not know it" (1994:3). The problem, however, may have been in the very "random" nature of the strategies used. Given that much crime follows relatively stable patterns in terms of spatial and time distribution, a directed, as opposed to a random, approach to police patrol seems to offer strategic advantages. Similarly, although rapid response may be important in the relatively rare situations of a true emergency where the offender is present at the time of the call, why would we think that an overall strategy geared toward the exceptional would have an effect on crime generally?

The Kansas City gun experiment and other studies that take a more directed patrol approach suggest that indeed the police *can* affect crime. These studies suggest that it is what the police do while on patrol that is the critical ingredient.<sup>2</sup> Research along these lines includes studies of the number of police, aggressive traffic enforcement, police crackdowns, and targeting high-risk individuals in high-risk locations.

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<sup>1</sup> This research is reviewed in detail in McGarrell, Chermak, and Weiss (1999).

### Numbers of Police

A commonsense notion is that increasing the number of police in a particular area (city, district, neighborhood) will lead to reduced crime because of the increased likelihood of detection and arrest (specific deterrence) and the perceived increase in risk of offending because of greater police presence (general deterrence). Perhaps surprising, however, is that a number of studies that have examined the relationship between the number of police and the level of crime have not found a strong correlation between the two (see Sherman, 1997; Bayley, 1994). We can suggest several possibilities to explain these findings. First, it may be that the police genuinely do not have an effect on crime; thus, increasing the numbers of police could not be expected to affect crime. A second possibility may be that more police utilizing ineffective strategies (e.g., random patrol) does not affect crime. A third possibility may be that the finding of police ineffectiveness is the product of methodological problems. For just as there will be more firefighters at more serious fires, cities with more crime are likely to hire and employ more police. Simply put, crime may affect levels of police and levels of police may affect crime. Thus, we anticipate a positive relationship between the number of police and the level of crime if examined at a particular point in time.

A recent study employing an analytic technique that better controls for the simultaneous influences of crime and numbers of police finds support for the hypothesis that increased numbers of police reduce crime (Marvel and Moody, 1996). Here the researchers analyzed the relationship between police force size and crime over a twenty-year period in fifty-six large cities and in forty-nine of the fifty states. They found that increases in the number of police were associated with crime reductions in the subsequent year. Indeed, they estimated that an additional officer hired in a city results in an average reduction of twenty-four Part I offenses annually. Further, they found that the effects were strongest in urban areas where the crime problems were most significant (as opposed to small towns, suburbs, and rural areas).

### Aggressive Traffic Enforcement

Police departments vary in their approaches to law enforcement and service provision. Some departments strictly enforce the law, others exercise discretion and emphasize maintaining order, while still others place a premium on service delivery (Wilson, 1968). Some have hypothesized that more aggressive policing in legalistic police departments would result in more traffic stops and more citations than would be the case in other departments. This more aggressive style of traffic enforcement would in turn increase the risks for potential offenders and consequently be associated with lower levels of crime. Several studies have found support for this hypothesis (Wilson and Boland, 1978; Sampson and Cohen, 1988). On the other hand, several others failed to find a relationship between increased traffic enforcement and crime (Jacob and Rich, 1981; Weiss and Freels, 1996).

Increasing the numbers of police and increased traffic enforcement show some evidence of crime control effects; yet the findings are mixed. The next set of strategies attempt to move beyond increasing numbers or aggressiveness and toward aiming increased police resources and aggressiveness at particular targets (locations, problems, potential offenders).

### Police Crackdowns

Directed patrol projects can be thought of as one approach to a broader group of strategies known as police crackdowns. Crackdowns have been defined as “increases in either the certainty or severity of official police reaction to a specific type of crime or all crime in a specific area.... Police crackdowns constitute a sudden, usually proactive change in activity (Sherman, 1990:2).” Crackdowns have been used to address both general crime problems in a particular location and specific crime problems including drug sales, prostitution, robbery, and drunk driving (see Sherman, 1992).

Crackdowns have gained support as police officials and crime researchers have begun to understand better the geographic concentration of crime. Crime is largely concentrated within particular neighborhoods of the city and even within these neighborhoods there tend to be hot spots of crime and disorder. Indeed, estimates are that 3 percent of the addresses in a city generate as much as 50 percent of the crime (Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989; see also Spelman and Eck, 1989). Given this concentration, targeting police resources at these high-crime areas seems to offer potential for crime control as a number of studies of crackdowns focused on robbery locations, subways, and high-crime neighborhoods have shown (Press, 1971; Chaiken, Lawless, and Stevenson, 1974; Schnelle et al., 1975, 1977; Sherman and Weisburd, 1995; Koper, 1995).

### Targeting Firearms Violence by Considering High-Risk Locations and People

In addition to focusing on high-crime locations, the police can further target their efforts by focusing on suspicious behaviors or high-risk individuals. One example of such an approach comes from the San Diego field interrogation experiment. In this project, police were encouraged to stop and question suspicious individuals (Boydston, 1975).<sup>3</sup> Three study conditions were implemented in three areas. In one area, traditional field interrogation was continued. In a second, officers received special training on field interrogations with the goal of minimizing police-citizen conflict. In the third area, field interrogations were discontinued. The most interesting findings emerged from the area where field interrogations were suspended. This area witnessed a significant increase in crime. Once field interrogations were resumed, there was a significant reduction in crime. Similar effects were observed for suspicion stops in three metropolitan areas (Whitaker et al., 1985).

An additional example of a focused deterrence strategy comes from Boston's efforts to reduce youth homicide (Kennedy, 1997). A research team led by David Kennedy worked closely with Boston police, prosecutors, probation, and related officials, and found that youth homicides were largely concentrated in particular neighborhoods and involved youths

***Crime is largely concentrated within particular neighborhoods of the city and even within these neighborhoods there tend to be hot spots of crime and disorder. Indeed, estimates are that 3 percent of the addresses in a city generate as much as 50 percent of the crime.***

<sup>3</sup> Suppressible crimes were defined as: robbery, burglary, grand theft, petty theft, auto theft, assault/battery, sex crimes, and malicious mischief/disturbances (Boydston, 1975:4)

with extensive criminal involvement and gang affiliations. The criminal justice team, along with clergy and neighborhood leaders, then began holding a series of face-to-face meetings with youths residing in the neighborhoods and involved in gang activity. The meetings focused on the theme that violence would no longer be tolerated and that shootings would result in unprecedented law enforcement attention. When shootings did occur, all potential sanctions were applied to the groups involved. This experience then became the example that made the threat credible in future meetings. The idea behind the meetings was that, rather than rely on mass media communication or the hope that arrest and prosecution experiences would become known within the offending population, law enforcement should go directly to those individuals known to be most at risk for participating as either suspects or victims in homicides and communicate the zero-tolerance message. The results have been dramatic. The city experienced a period of approximately two and one-half years without a youth homicide and a 67 percent reduction in youth homicides compared to 1990-1995 averages. Baltimore, Indianapolis, and High Point, North Carolina are now conducting these types of meetings and assessing impact.

### Theoretical Implications

The research reviewed above suggests that the effects observed in the Kansas City gun experiment are likely the result of deterrence, incapacitation, or both. In Kansas City, the highest violent crime neighborhood in the city received approximately 4,500 additional police patrol hours over a six-month period. Further, the officers were engaged in directed patrol and thus could conduct traffic stops and investigate suspicious activities without having to respond to calls for police service.

The increased level of patrol and the increased visibility through traffic stops may have had a general deterrence effect since the likelihood of detection, apprehension, and punishment was increased for all citizens in the neighborhood. To the extent that the officers were focusing on seizing illegal weapons it may also have had a specific deterrent effect. That is, when told to concentrate on seizing illegal guns the officers may have focused their attention on individuals suspected of carrying illegal weapons. This increased surveillance may have changed the perceived likelihood of arrest and prosecution among those most likely to offend.

An additional plausible explanation is that the removal of illegal weapons from the neighborhood had an incapacitation, or opportunity-reduction, effect. By reducing the number of illegal weapons in the neighborhood, the opportunities for violent gun crime were decreased.

The Kansas City study indicates that this type of directed patrol effort can have a significant impact on firearms crime. Given its single-site focus, however, it cannot help us isolate the key elements of the strategy nor distinguish between general deterrence, specific deterrence, and incapacitation effects. Although the present study cannot provide definitive answers to these questions, it can offer a test of whether the Kansas City results can be replicated in another setting, and it can begin to identify some of the key elements of the directed patrol approach that may reduce gun crime.

## THE INDIANAPOLIS PROJECT

The Kansas City gun experiment was a twenty-nine-week project begun in the summer of 1992. The project targeted one relatively small police beat comprised of a population of 4,528 residents and 0.64 square miles (Shaw, 1994). In contrast, the Indianapolis directed patrol experiment was a ninety-day project initiated on July 15, 1997 in two target areas, one from IPD's north district and the other from its east district.

The beats were chosen through the Indianapolis Management Accountability Program (IMAP). The IMAP program, an adaptation of New York Police Department's COMPSTAT program, consists of periodic and systematic review of crime patterns throughout the city. The IMAP review indicated that these four beats were consistently among the highest in the city for violent crime, drug distribution, and property crime (see Figure 1, following page).

The north target beats cover a territory of just less than 3 square miles with over 16,000 residents. The neighborhoods within these beats are predominately African American and low income. The east target beats cover a territory of 1.7 square miles with over 14,000 residents. The neighborhoods are comprised principally of white residents. Fourteen percent are African Americans and there is a small but growing Hispanic population. This area is also comprised of primarily low-income households.

Compared to the target beat in the Kansas City project, the target beats in the directed patrol experiment are much more populous. As will be discussed in subsequent sections, the Kansas City target beat received nearly as much police patrol as did all four Indianapolis target beats, though it was spread over six rather than three months.

In the analysis that follows, we also make comparisons to a two-beat comparison area. This comparison area consists of two east district beats. Selecting comparison beats in a study of this kind is very problematic. Simply put, no two areas are alike, and they are likely to be influenced by a myriad of demographic, economic, neighborhood, and police processes. Further, in an ideal situation we would have selected the beats most like our beats in terms of crime patterns. This proved impossible, however, because the beats most like our target beats tend to be those that are contiguous to the target beats. We did not want to utilize contiguous beats as comparisons, however, since here we intend to examine crime effects in these surrounding beats.

The comparison beats are more populous than the target beats and cover a significantly larger land area. The area houses primarily African-American residents and is thus more comparable to the north target area.

At the time the project areas were chosen, the north target area had a homicide rate three times that of the city. Its robbery and aggravated assault rates were almost twice that of the city.<sup>4</sup> On property crime, however, the north target beat's property crime rate was actually slightly lower than the city's rate. The east target area's homicide rate fell between that of the north area and the city's rate. The east target area had a particularly high rate of

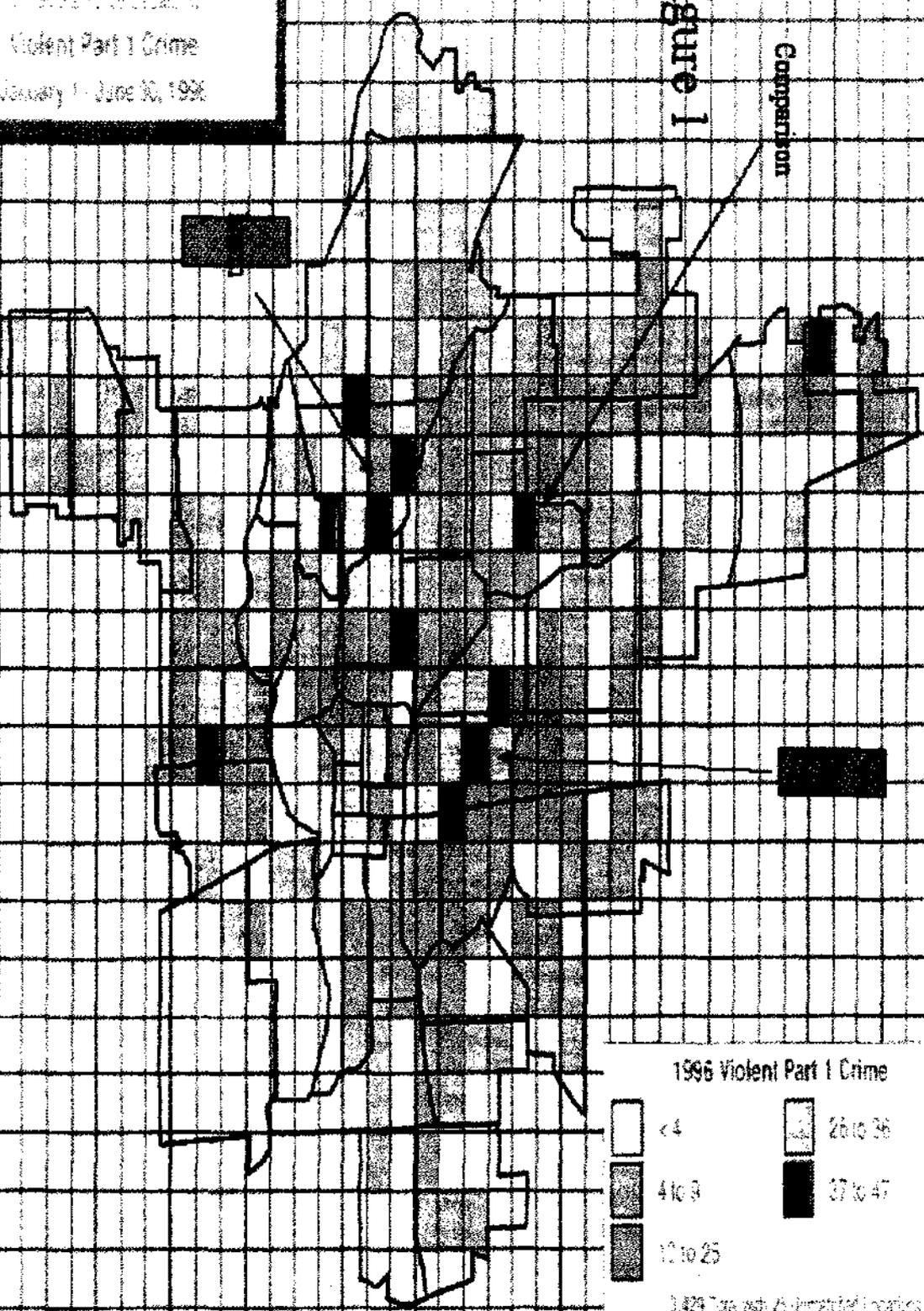
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<sup>4</sup> The City of Indianapolis is part of a consolidated city-county governmental structure. The police department's jurisdiction consists of the center city with a 1990 population of 377,723. The crime data and the population base refer to the police department's jurisdiction. The figures differ from those reported in the Uniform Crime Reporting program that includes the consolidated city-county jurisdiction (approximately 760,000 population).

1996 Violent Part 1 Crime  
January 1 - June 30, 1996

Figure 1

Comparison



1996 Violent Part 1 Crime

	< 4		26 to 36
	4 to 8		37 to 47
	10 to 25		

0,429 Total with 26 Unincorporated Locations

robbery, and the rate of aggravated assault was nearly twice that of the city. The rate of property crimes was higher in the east target area than either the city or the north target areas. The north and east target beats are quite dense areas, thus reducing their population-based rate of crime. Both north and east areas, however, have very high rates of violent crime for the area size of the beats. This was why the areas were chosen for the projects based on violent crime maps. Finally, although the comparison beats had a higher violent crime rate than the city, it was considerably lower than the target beats.

In addition to comparing the target beats' crime trend to the two comparison beats, we will also compare it to the trend for the city as a whole (minus crime in the target beats). This element of the analysis works on the assumption that the city crime trend provides the best estimate of what was likely to occur in the target beats absent the directed patrol project. We believe that this is a reasonable assumption given that the four target beats have historically been among the highest crime beats in the city.

***The east target strategy followed a general deterrence strategy—maximizing police vehicle stops, thereby creating a sense of significantly increased police presence. The north district followed a specific deterrence or targeted offender approach.***

#### **The East and North District Strategies**

Once the target beats were selected, planning for actual implementation was left to the command staff of each district (east and north). During an earlier directed patrol initiative known as the Safe Streets Project,<sup>5</sup> each district had developed slightly different approaches to their directed patrol initiatives. The east district sought to increase the number of traffic stops to maximum levels. The north district sought to use traffic stops in a more targeted fashion to increase investigations of suspicious persons and to focus on seizures of illegal weapons and drugs. Following these earlier practices, each district implemented a slightly different directed patrol strategy.

The east target strategy followed a general deterrence strategy. This involves maximizing police vehicle stops, thereby creating a sense of significantly increased police presence. Thus, officers are encouraged to stop vehicles for any type of motor vehicle infraction (e.g., expired license plate, tail-light out). The theory is that offenders will be deterred by this increased police presence. Additionally, the police anticipate that the large number of vehicle stops will yield seizures of illegal weapons and drugs.

The north district followed a specific deterrence or targeted offender approach. This involves a more selective approach to vehicle and pedestrian stops with a more thorough investigation upon the stop. Thus, cars driving slowly through a known drug-selling area that exhibit a traffic infraction, or cars speeding through the neighborhood, would be likely targets of a traffic stop. The idea is to target resources toward individuals suspected to be involved in illegal behavior, and to maximize seizures of illegal weapons and drugs through the more thorough investigation.

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<sup>5</sup> The Safe Streets Project was a thirty-day initiative in November–December, 1995.

## DIRECTED PATROL ACTIVITIES AND EFFECTS ON CRIME

In this section, we present the findings on the activities and outputs by the officers working directed patrol and the impact on gun-related crime. In effect, we were interested in understanding what the officers working directed patrol did and whether it affected levels of firearm crime. The methodology used to address these issues is described in the appendix.

## Activities and Outputs of Directed Patrol Officers

The data suggest that the directed patrol officers had a clear presence in the target neighborhoods. Officers working directed patrol spent just under 4,900 hours assigned to the project in addition to the normal patrol in the neighborhood. In the ninety-day period they stopped over 5,200 vehicles, and issued over 1,600 traffic citations and 2,800 warning tickets. Discussions with officers suggest that warning tickets are often used for minor infractions. Officers explained that they believe issuing expensive tickets to low-income residents mitigates their efforts to build positive community relations. Citations were issued for more serious infractions and for repeat violations.

Figure 2  
Indianapolis Police Department  
Directed Patrol Project  
Summary

- 90-day project initiated 7/15/97
- Two target areas
- ◆ Officer hours: 4879.75
- ◆ Traffic citations: 1638
- ◆ Warning tickets: 2837
- ◆ Vehicle stops: 5253
- ◆ Felony arrests: 84
- ◆ Total arrests: 992

The directed patrol experiment resulted in 84 felony arrests, 654 misdemeanor arrests, and 254 warrant arrests, for a total of 992 arrests. There were twenty-five illegal weapons seized. In addition, eighty-one legal weapons were discovered, indicating the presence of three times as many legal as illegal weapons on the streets. As will be discussed subsequently, an additional sixty-two illegal weapons were seized by other officers working in the target areas. Directed patrol officers also made sixty-one drug seizures during the project period.

Although comparable data are not available for all the measures, there were some similarities and some differences between the Indianapolis and Kansas City gun projects. The total number of hours worked was quite similar but, as noted earlier, in Kansas City the time was focused on one rather than two target areas and for a six-month versus three-

month period. The total number of vehicle stops appears to be considerably higher in the directed patrol experiment than in the Kansas City experiment. The number of arrests was somewhat higher in Indianapolis. The total number of firearms seized was very similar in the two projects. Though given the larger number of vehicle stops in Indianapolis, it appears that the Kansas City team seized more on a per vehicle stop basis.

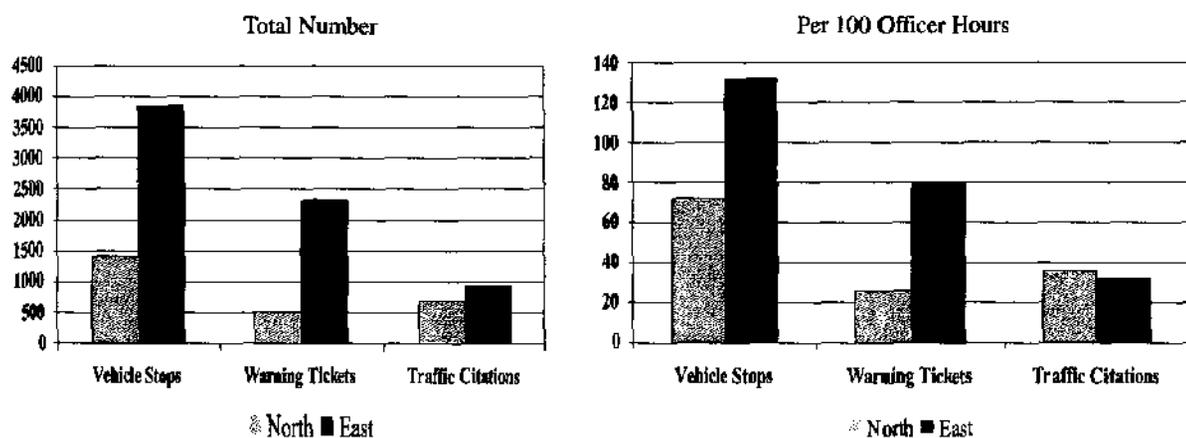
**General Deterrence and Targeted Deterrence Strategies Compared**

The activity data suggest that two comparable but distinct strategies were implemented in the two target areas. Recall that the east target area implemented a general deterrence strategy. In essence, this involved casting a wide net that emphasized maximizing vehicle stops. Thus any type of motor vehicle infraction would likely trigger a vehicle stop. The intention was to create a sense of police omnipresence, thereby deterring would-be offenders and reassuring neighborhood residents. The north target area followed a specific or targeted deterrence strategy. North district officers were instructed to focus on suspicious activities. Consequently, a vehicle frequenting a known drug market area or speeding through the neighborhood might be stopped. The idea was to investigate suspicious activity and thereby notify potential offenders of the increased police presence, uncover criminal activity, and seize drugs and illegal firearms.

As the result of an initial delay in full implementation in the north target area, the east target area received an additional 900 hours of directed patrol. East district officers stopped over 3,800 vehicles compared to 1,400 by north district officers. Combining traffic citations and warning tickets, east district officers issued 3,267 tickets compared to 1,208 for those in the north district. The discrepancy can be largely attributed to the difference in warning tickets: east district issued over 2,300 warning tickets compared to 510 by north district officers. Figure 3 displays these activities on a per officer hour basis.

The number of felony arrests was virtually the same in the two districts: 41 and 43 for north and east districts, respectively. East district officers made more misdemeanor arrests and more total arrests. On a per officer hour basis, however, north district officers made

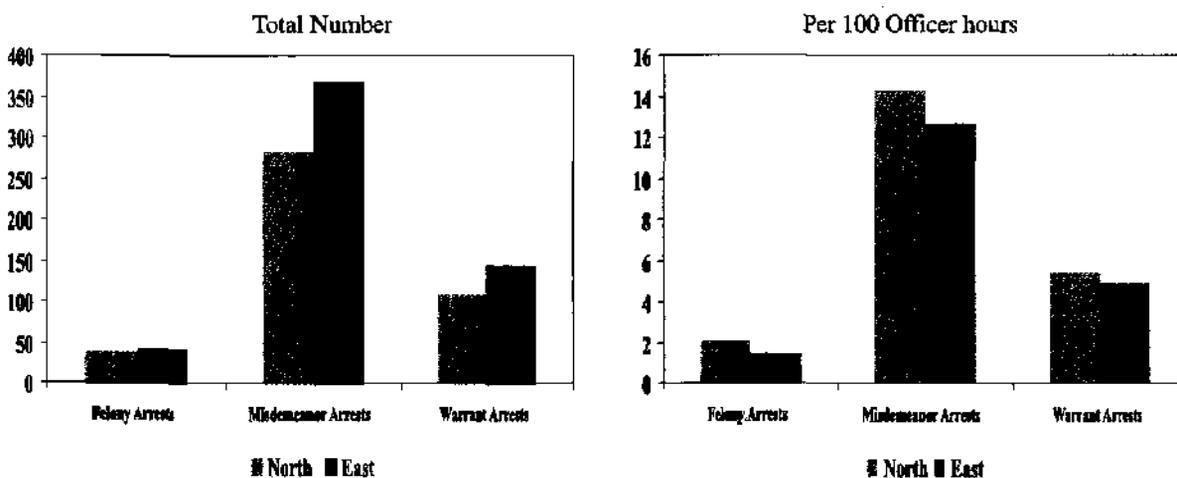
**Figure 3**  
**Vehicle Stops and Tickets**



somewhat more arrests (22 per 100 officer hours in north target versus 19 in the east target).

The differences between the two districts become more apparent when viewed on a per vehicle stop basis (see Figure 5, following page). East district officers wrote many more warning tickets whereas north district officers were more likely to issue a citation. The north district officers made 2.9 felony arrests per vehicle stop compared to 1.1 for east district officers, and twice as many total arrests per vehicle stop. North target officers made twice as many total arrests per vehicle stop as did east target officers. The north district officers were more than twice as likely to uncover an illegal firearm in a traffic stop, and they discovered three times as many total guns per stop. The north district officers also

## Figure 4 Arrests

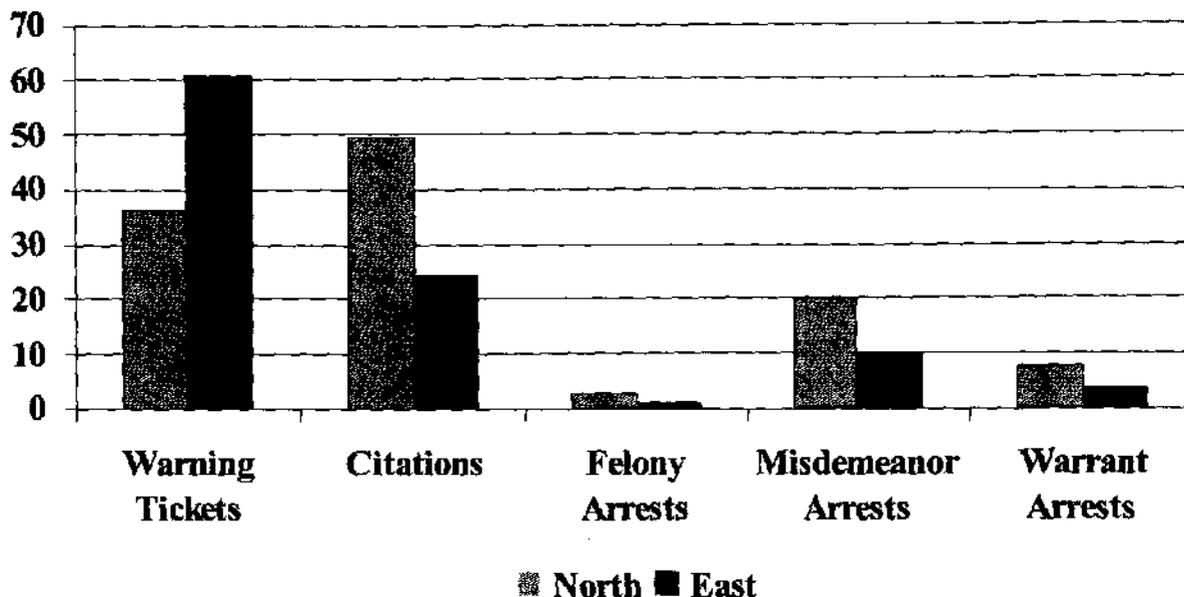


made 126 probation checks: these did not, however, result from vehicle stops but rather proactive checks of probationers at their residences. This was part of the targeted offender strategy.

Our observations of officers working directed patrol through ride-alongs were consistent with the data described above, and generally support the integrity of the two treatment regimens. When asked to identify the reason why the contact was initiated, 55 percent of north officers identified a traffic law violation, whereas 71 percent of east district contacts were based on traffic law violations. Nineteen percent of contacts in the north district were directed towards a suspicious person or situation. Only 3 percent of east district contacts were based on suspicious activity (beyond the traffic violation itself). Whereas only 9 percent of east district contacts resulted in a traffic citation, 26 percent of the north district contacts resulted in a citation. Contacts in both areas tended to last about fifteen minutes.

The total number of illegal firearms seized in the two target areas was quite similar. The total number includes those seized by the directed patrol officers as well as those seized through regular police activities in the target areas. There were forty-two illegal firearms seized in the north target area during the ninety-day project period, and forty-five

Figure 5  
 Tickets and Arrests per Vehicle Stop



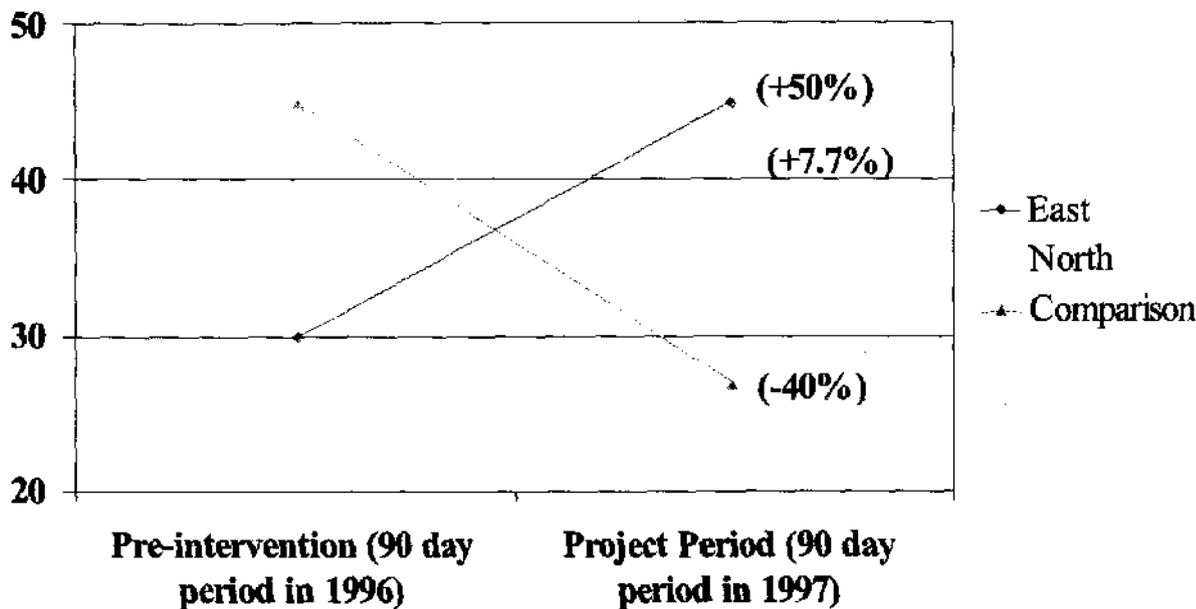
seized in the east target area. This represented a modest increase over 1996 levels for the north target area and a sizeable 50 percent increase for the east district (see Figure 6, following page). The number of seizures in the comparison area declined 40 percent. For the sake of comparison, there were a total of seventy-six firearms seized in the Kansas City experiment during the directed patrol experiment. Thus, the absolute number of firearms seized in the directed patrol project (N=87) was actually greater than in the Kansas City project. The Kansas City seizures, however, occurred in a more concentrated geographic area.

Nature of Citizen Contacts

Contacts were relatively short. The average contact was fifteen minutes long; 60 percent were less than ten minutes long. Offenders were predominantly male (82 percent), and half were African American.<sup>6</sup> Fifty-three percent lived in the neighborhood where the police contacted them. One-third of the offenders were under twenty-four years of age. Distribution of offender race was generally consistent with district demographics. Eight-two percent of offenders in the north district were African American. In contrast, thirty-one percent of east district offenders were African American. This indicated that African Americans were slightly underrepresented in stops in the north target area and somewhat overrepresented in stops in the east target area compared to neighborhood demographics.

<sup>6</sup> Many contacts involved more than one individual. All demographics are based on the first offender described in the data.

## Figure 6 Illegal Firearms Seizures



On only four contacts did the police frisk the offender. Thirteen times the offender was handcuffed. Twenty percent of the contacts included the search of a motor vehicle. Of the 104 observed contacts, four resulted in the seizure of a firearm; three resulted in the seizure of drugs. Forty-four percent of encounters resulted in a warning citation, fifteen percent in a regular traffic citation. Three offenders were arrested for non-traffic charges.

### Summary of Outputs and Strategies

The findings suggest that the directed patrol effort was implemented in a meaningful fashion in both the north and east district target areas. Over 4,800 officer hours were devoted to this ninety-day project, over 5,000 vehicle checks, and nearly 1,000 arrests were made. The eighty-seven total firearms seizures was more than the number seized in the Kansas City project, though distributed over a wider geographic area.

Further, although the findings from the two target areas were not dramatically different, they do suggest that each target received a somewhat different directed patrol strategy. The east target general deterrence strategy involved maximizing police vehicle stops, thereby creating a sense of significantly increased police presence.

The north district, by contrast, followed a targeted offender approach. As noted previously, this involves a more selective approach to vehicle and pedestrian stops with a more thorough investigation upon the stop. The idea is to target resources toward individuals suspected of being involved in illegal behavior. The approach also seeks to maximize seizures of illegal weapons and drugs through the more thorough investigation.

The output and the observational data indicate that the two districts did implement these two related but distinct strategies. The larger number of vehicle stops and the larger number of tickets issued in the east district are indicative of this "casting a wide net" strategy. The north district targeted offender approach appears to come closer to the strategy employed in Kansas City. The number of vehicle stops, the higher rate of arrests and gun seizures per vehicle stop, and the observational finding of more stops for suspicious behavior are indicative of this targeted offender strategy.

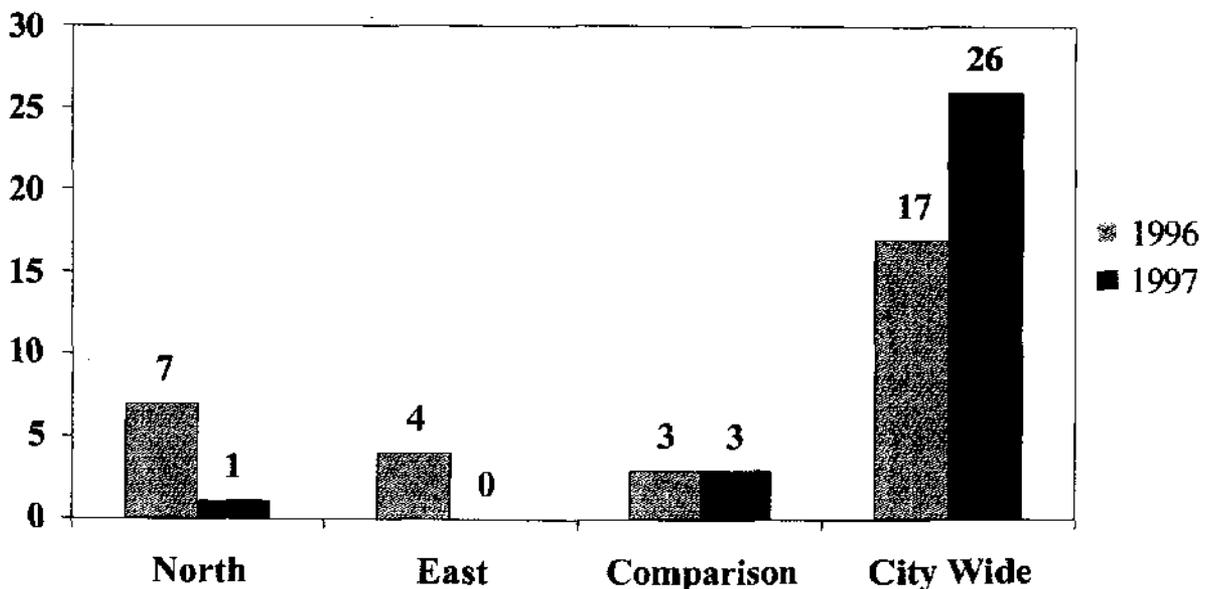
**Impact on Crime**

*Homicide*

When looking at both target areas, the most significant finding is for homicide. Homicides in the target beats were reduced from eleven in the 1996 period to one in 1997. The comparison beats remained the same with three homicides, though the small number of incidents makes the meaning of such figures difficult to assess. At the same time, homicides increased for the remainder of the city from seventeen in 1996 to twenty-six in 1997, a 53 percent increase. Had the target beats experienced the same increase that the city did, we estimate there would have been seventeen homicides in the target beats rather than one and forty-three homicides in the city as opposed to twenty-seven.

We examined the eleven homicides that occurred during the same period of 1996 in the target beats. Three were domestic situations and one was unknown in terms of motive

**Figure 7**  
**Homicides**  
Project Period Compared to Prior Year



Note: UCR Data reported are from 7/15 thru 10/15 for each year respectively.

or relationship between offender and victim. The remaining seven involved the type of street-level violence that the directed patrol strategy seeks to deter. Thus, it appears plausible that the directed patrol strategy played a role in the reduction in homicide for the target beats in 1997 compared to 1996.

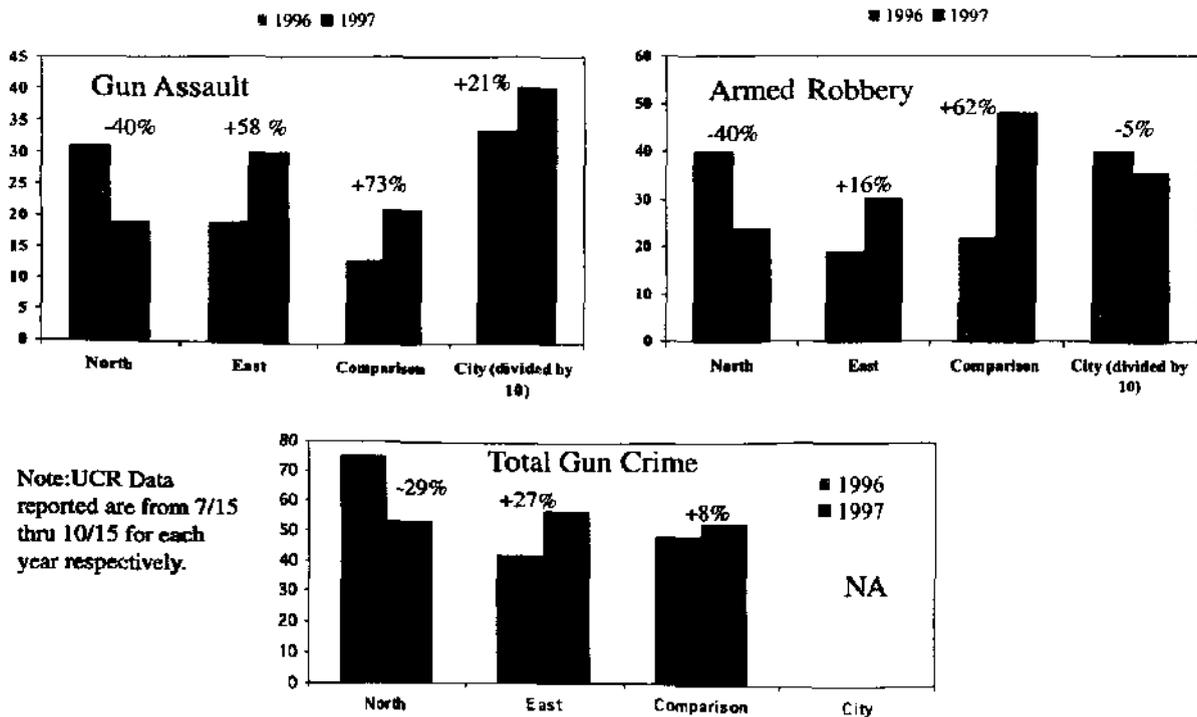
**Gun Assaults and Armed Robbery**

When we move from homicide to aggravated assault with a gun and armed robbery, an interesting pattern emerges. The positive effect of directed patrol was largely isolated to the north target area where the targeted deterrence approach was implemented. As Figure 8 indicates, there were 40 percent reductions in gun assaults and armed robberies in the north target area. By contrast, the east target area and the comparison area both witnessed sizeable increases in these offenses. For the city, minus the target areas, gun assaults increased 21 percent during the project period. Armed robberies declined 5 percent. It appears, then, that the north area's targeted deterrence approach had an impact on gun assaults and armed robberies.

**Total Firearms Crimes**

We also examined the impact on all firearms-related crimes. These include homicides with a gun, armed robberies, and gun assaults—but also other offenses, such as criminal

**Figure 8**  
**Firearms Crimes**  
Project Period Compared to Prior Year



mischief. Total gun crimes declined 29 percent in the north target area. By contrast, firearms crimes increased 27 percent in the east target area and 8 percent in the comparison area. Other than homicide, consequently, it appears that the positive effects on firearms-related crimes were confined to the north target beats.

There was little evidence of impact on other types of crime. Although motor vehicle theft declined in the north target area, it also witnessed a decline in the comparison area and citywide.

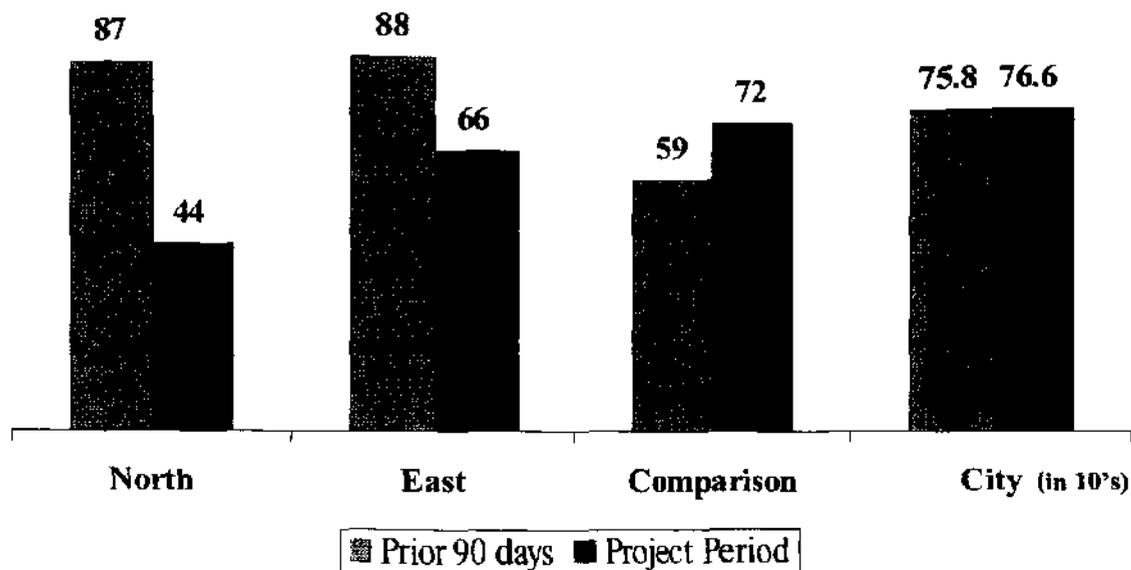
*Comparisons to Prior Ninety-Day Period*

In the design of our study we decided that the most appropriate comparison period for the study was the same ninety-day period of the previous year. This controls for any seasonal effects that may influence the crime rate. When our report was submitted to the National Institute of Justice, one of the anonymous peer reviewers made the suggestion that we compare the results to the crime trend of the previous ninety days. Although we did not have the resources to read all the incident reports and count all firearms crimes, we were able to look at the trend for aggravated assault with a gun, armed robbery, and homicide.

Combining these three major violent crime categories, the results confirmed the findings for the north target area. Gun assaults, armed robberies, and homicides decreased 49 percent compared to the ninety days prior to the project's time frame—a figure very consistent with the earlier findings.

**Figure 9**  
**Gun Assaults, Armed Robberies, and Homicides**

(project period compared to previous 90 days)



For the east district, the results were somewhat more promising than were those derived from comparing the east target area to the previous year. Gun assaults, armed robberies, and homicides declined 25 percent compared to the previous ninety days. By contrast, the control area experienced a 22 percent increase and the city experienced a 1 percent increase over the previous ninety days (see Figure 9, previous page).

Thus, the comparison with the prior ninety days provides strong support for the conclusion that the north district experienced a significant decrease in violent crime and some evidence that there may have been a modest decrease in the east district.

### *Residual Deterrence*

Sherman (1990) has urged researchers to distinguish between the initial deterrent effect that may occur while a directed patrol crackdown is being implemented and the long-term deterrent effect that may continue after the crackdown has terminated. He labels the long-term impact "residual deterrence." To examine whether there was evidence of a residual deterrence effect, we examined the trend in crime for the ninety-day period following the termination of directed patrol (October 16, 1997 to January 15, 1998) compared to the same period of the previous year.

The trend in the north target area was consistent with a residual deterrence effect. Homicides were down from three in the comparable period of 1996 to zero in 1997. Gun assaults and armed robberies declined 30 and 15 percent, respectively. Caution should be exercised in interpreting these results, however, because gun assaults were down in the other three areas (east, comparison area, and citywide) and armed robberies were down citywide. Although the results are consistent with a residual deterrence effect, then, the fact that similar declines occurred elsewhere means that something else may have been generating the decline.

### *Crime Displacement or Diffusion of Benefits*

Discussion of place-focused crime control strategies often leads to concerns that crime will simply be displaced to other areas. While it is likely that this occurs with some offenders, some research suggests that projects of this kind can actually have positive effects on surrounding areas, an outcome known as the diffusion of benefits (Clarke and Weisburd, 1994; see also Eck, 1993).

To examine the possibility of displacement or diffusion, we analyzed crime trends in the nine beats that surround the four target beats. Simply put, there was little evidence of displacement and no evidence of diffusion. Only two of the beats surrounding the north target area (where directed patrol appeared to have an impact) witnessed a change in crime. One experienced an increase, the other a decrease. There was a 10 percent increase in total firearms crimes<sup>7</sup> in the five beats surrounding the north target beats. The daily rate increased from 1.34 to 1.47, but this was spread over a five beat area and was not a statistically significant increase. The fact that there was some increase, however, means that a displacement effect cannot be entirely dismissed.

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<sup>7</sup> Measured as the number of homicides, aggravated assaults with a gun, and armed robberies.

## CITIZEN PERCEPTIONS

The findings from Kansas City and from the north target area suggest that directed patrol focused on illegal weapons can have a profound impact on gun crime. Yet, the strategy may come at a cost beyond paying for the additional officer hours. Because of directed patrol, over 5,000 vehicles were stopped in two neighborhoods in Indianapolis in a ninety-day period. In that period, over 1,600 traffic citations and additional warning tickets were issued. But, for police managers the possible adverse consequences of implementing such aggressive patrol strategies raise an important consideration: if citizens criticize the police, and view the frequent stops as harassment, then any reduction in crime comes with significant costs. Citizen support for the police may decrease, public criticism increase, and racial tensions intensify. These consequences, were they to occur, would deal a considerable blow to any department's community policing program.

These issues were particularly sensitive in the summer of 1997. In late summer of the previous year several off-duty officers were part of what would become known as the "Downtown Police Brawl." The officers had become involved in an incident with two citizens. Although the event occurred in 1996, it was in the news throughout 1997, and four of the officers concerned went on trial in the middle of the directed patrol experiment. Given this negative media attention, we anticipated public criticism of the aggressive directed patrol strategy.

On the other hand, the police reported that they were continually receiving requests for more patrol and more aggressive patrol in the city's high-crime neighborhoods. Indeed, our research team observed such citizen requests in police-neighborhood meetings.

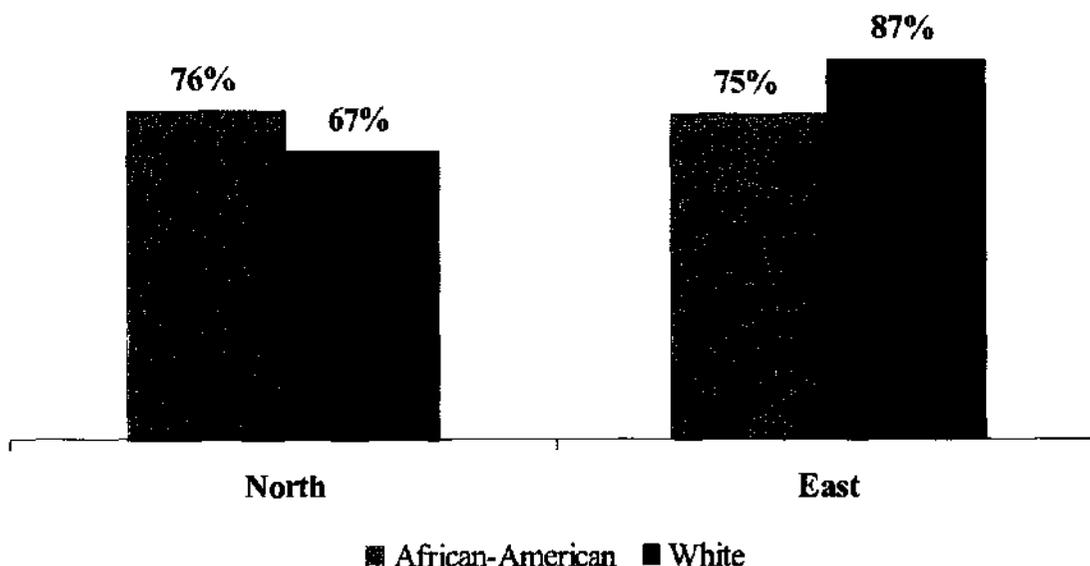
In this context, we wanted to address how citizens perceive aggressive patrol strategies, and investigate how an intense presence affects citizen opinions about the police. In addition, we wanted to examine whether citizen perceptions of crime, fear, and disorder changed after the implementation of this patrol program. Our research design included citizen surveys in both the experimental and comparison beats to address these issues. (Complete findings from the public opinion survey are presented in McGarrell, Chermak, and Weiss, 1999.)

### Key Findings

The survey findings indicate that a large percentage of citizens were aware of the program, and voiced strong support for the use of aggressive patrol strategies to address crime in their neighborhoods. Three-quarters of the respondents voiced strong support for the directed patrol program at the end of the project period, a slight increase from the pre-intervention period. Although directed patrol did not dramatically influence citizens' support for this type of effort, it is clear that the large number of vehicle stops and citations did not weaken support. Support for directed patrol was higher in the target areas than it was for the comparison areas.

Overall, there was virtually no difference among whites and African Americans in terms of support for the directed patrol strategy. As Figure 10 (following page) demonstrates, blacks in the north target area were more supportive of directed patrol than were whites. By contrast, in the east target area whites were more supportive. In both cases the differences were small. In

**Figure 10**  
**Support for Directed Patrol**  
 (post-intervention)



the east district, there was a significant increase in support for directed patrol among white respondents. Support among blacks did not change from the pre-intervention to the post-intervention survey.

The level of support for the Indianapolis Police Department was high in all beats. For the entire sample, over 70 percent reported that the neighborhood had a favorable opinion of IPD. There were no significant changes from the pre- to post-intervention survey in terms of support for IPD. Nor were there significant racial or gender differences. Thus, directed patrol did not generate additional support for the police, but it also clearly did not reduce support for the police.

The only rating items that generated racial differences concerned police professionalism and courtesy. Whites were more likely to rate officers as professional and courteous. There was a slight decrease in these rating items from the pre-intervention to post-intervention measures; but these changes were also witnessed in the comparison area, suggesting they were more likely produced by the high-profile trial than by the directed patrol project.

An examination of citizen perceptions of crime and specific types of crime revealed little change when comparing the pre- to post-experiment results. However, there was a considerable change in the types of offenses most likely to be affected by an increased police presence. Specifically, the number of citizens claiming that drugs and guns were a major problem decreased significantly in the experimental areas, and remained the same in the comparison area. There were few changes in citizen evaluation of the quality-of-life items examined. Citizen approval ratings of neighborhoods improved only slightly in the

experimental areas. The north target area residents did show some change in the perception of the neighborhood. Fewer citizens rated their neighborhood as poor, and more rated it as good, in the post-program survey. Similarly, the percentage of citizens stating that their neighborhood was a better place to live increased in this area, while the percentage of citizens responding that it was worse decreased considerably. In the pre-intervention survey, 26 percent of the citizens stated that their neighborhood had gotten worse in the last three months. Following directed patrol, however, only 12 percent of the citizens gave the same answer.

To summarize, nearly three-quarters of citizens supported the directed patrol program, and most citizens were supportive of the police department. There was some evidence that citizens perceived some improvement in the neighborhood but the changes were quite modest. The public opinion results indicate that one would not implement such an effort simply to improve citizens' perceptions of the police. They suggest, however, that such an aggressive police strategy can be implemented without eroding citizen support and that this holds true among both black and white residents. Some of the reasons for this finding are discussed in subsequent sections.

***The public opinion results indicate that one would not implement such an effort simply to improve citizens' perceptions of the police. They suggest, however, that such an aggressive police strategy can be implemented without eroding citizen support and that this holds true among both black and white residents.***

#### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

As noted at the outset, the findings of this study have implications for at least three sets of current policy issues and debates. We summarize the current research findings in the context of these issues.

##### Police Impact on Crime

The significant decline in crime experienced in the United States in the mid- to late 1990s has generated a debate on the role of the police in crime reduction. Many criminologists have operated on the assumption that the police and the criminal justice system have little if any affect on crime. This assumption tends to be based on prior research such as the Kansas City randomized patrol experiment (Kelling et al., 1974) and, in the prison rehabilitation area, on research such as the Martinson report that "nothing works" (1974). It is also based on ideological beliefs that attribute crime to factors such as poverty, racial injustice, and income inequality. If one attributes crime to these broad structural factors then it appears illogical that the criminal justice system can influence the level of crime in a community.

These beliefs have been most directly challenged by the New York City experience where major changes in police practice initiated by Former Commissioner Bratton were associated with unprecedented declines in crime. They have also been challenged by contemporary research suggesting that indeed there are police practices that can reduce crime (see Sherman et al. 1997 for a thorough review).

The current study, particularly when read in tandem with the Kansas City gun project, clearly falls within the camp that asserts police effectiveness at least in the area of firearms violence. It gains support when considered in light of New York Police Department's (NYPD) emphasis on illegal gun carrying.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, one of the key elements of NYPD's proactive policing has been to conduct street investigations that emphasize the seizure of illegal weapons. Although not subject to controlled evaluation, the department attributes a portion of the dramatic decline in homicide to this strategy. The study also gains credence when considered in light of the San Diego Field Interrogation project described in an earlier section. Collectively, the NYPD experience, the Kansas City gun project, and the Indianapolis north target area results indicate that aggressive proactive policing targeted at high risk individuals in violent crime neighborhoods can generate significant reductions in violent crime.

This is not to imply that targeted policing focused on high-risk individuals at high-risk locations is the cause of the national decline in crime. Among the factors likely to be

***Collectively, the NYPD experience, the Kansas City gun project, and the Indianapolis north target area results indicate that aggressive proactive policing targeted at high risk individuals in violent crime neighborhoods can generate significant reductions in violent crime.***

playing a role in the latter are increased incarceration, an improved economy, and a variety of problem- and community-oriented policing strategies, including prevention-oriented collaborations with the community.<sup>9</sup> The point is simply that proactive directed patrol offers one more tool in the police toolkit for addressing an important element of the crime problem, firearms violence. The geographically concentrated nature of firearms violence suggests directed patrol may have considerable potential.

#### **Gun Control**

The United States is stocked with over 230 million guns and 59 million gun owners (Kleck, 1997). These guns generate a little under one million gun crimes per year. The events at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, coupled with other high-profile gun crimes, have once again stimulated contentious debate and political posturing around the issue of gun control. The debate generally leads to one of three positions: 1) proposals to reduce the number of guns in society, 2) proposals to regulate gun ownership, and 3)

proposals to enforce aggressively current laws against illegal possession and against crimes involving a gun.

At first glance, the results of the Kansas City gun experiment might suggest that new

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<sup>8</sup> At first glance it may appear that the east target area's wide-net approach was more consistent with NYPD's quality-of-life policing than was the north's targeted deterrence approach. We think this is not the case. In New York City, enforcing the law against subway fare beaters or squeegee men did not involve stopping every pedestrian but rather was a targeted approach triggered by specific behavior.

<sup>9</sup> A number of commentators have noted changing demographics. Yet the number of U.S. citizens aged 10-19, which includes the highest overall crime prone years of 16-17, began to increase in 1992, thus seeming to work against crime reductions. Demographics may play a role in specific communities, however.

gun laws reducing gun availability could be effective. In other words, if removing illegal weapons from the neighborhood resulted in reduced violent crime, then laws reducing gun availability in society generally should also have crime control effects.

Opponents of new gun laws raise the issue of whether these laws actually will result in fewer guns on the street, particularly in the hands of individuals most likely to use guns illegally. Beyond the question of whether additional gun laws would indeed result in fewer illegal weapons on the streets, the Indianapolis findings raise questions of whether it is the removal of illegal weapons or the increased surveillance of high risk individuals in high risk areas that produced the crime reductions. If such reductions were simply a matter of removing illegal weapons then we would expect that the east target area, which experienced a 50 percent increase in illegal firearm seizures, would have witnessed the decline in crime. Yet it was the north target area that experienced a modest 8 percent increase in seizures that saw the significant reduction in violent firearms crime.

The finding that increased attention to high-risk individuals in high-risk locations may be the key to reducing firearms crime gains credence when considered in tandem with research on the prior criminal histories of many of the individuals involved in homicides as either victims or suspects. In Indianapolis, a review of homicides occurring in 1997 through August 1998 revealed that approximately 60 percent of the incidents involved either a victim or suspect (or both) known to law enforcement to belong to a group of known, chronic offenders. Review of the criminal histories of these individuals confirmed this law enforcement description. Among homicide victims, 63 percent had either an adult or juvenile criminal record. Further, this estimate is conservative because it does not include arrests and convictions outside Marion County and juvenile records were unavailable for individuals twenty-five and older. Victims averaged 4.6 adult arrests. For those with a prior record, victims averaged 8 prior adult arrests and 4.5 prior juvenile arrests.

The picture was much the same for suspects. Three-fourths had either an adult or a juvenile record. They averaged just under 4 adult arrests. Those with a prior record averaged over 6 adult arrests and 5.5 prior juvenile arrests (McGarrell, 1998).

These results are very similar to findings in Boston and Minneapolis. In Boston, Kennedy and colleagues reviewed the records of 155 youthful homicide victims. Three-quarters had been arraigned for at least one offense. For those with a prior record, the average number of arraignments was 9.5. Of the 125 suspects, 77 percent had at least one prior arraignment, and those with a prior record averaged 9.7 arraignments (Kennedy, 1997; 1998). In Minneapolis, where limitations on the data system generated conservative estimates of prior records, 43 percent of victims and 72 percent of suspects had at least one prior arrest. For those with prior arrests, the average was 7.5 prior arrests for victims and 7.4 prior arrests for suspects (Kennedy and Braga, 1998). Further, in all three cities homicides were geographically concentrated in a relatively

***Beyond the question of whether additional gun laws would indeed result in fewer illegal weapons on the streets, the Indianapolis findings raise questions of whether it is the removal of illegal weapons or the increased surveillance of high risk individuals in high risk areas that produced the crime reductions.***

small number of neighborhoods (Kennedy and Braga, 1998; Kennedy, Piehl, and Braga, 1996).

Given the large proportion of homicide incidents in these three cities attributable to chronic offenders in select neighborhoods, a targeted deterrence strategy as employed in Kansas City and in the IPD north target area seems to make sense. It also gains support when read in light of the Boston Gun Project's "lever pulling" strategies discussed earlier, (these can also be considered a targeted deterrence strategy). Recall that Boston officials brought groups of known chronic offenders together in a courtroom for a face-to-face meeting in which the consequences of continued involvement in violence was directly communicated to those most at risk for involvement in homicides (as either victims or suspects). The face-to-face meetings were then coupled with teams of probation and police officers

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conducting home visits to ensure compliance with the terms of probation and to search for illegal weapons and drugs. Preliminary results from Indianapolis suggest that this targeted offender approach may be having a significant effect on homicide here as it did in Boston.<sup>10</sup>

The targeted deterrence approach also gains support when viewed in light of New York City Police Department's aggressive enforcement of illegal gun-carrying statutes coupled with the city's dramatic decline in homicide. Richmond, Virginia's Project Exile, involving aggressive federal prosecution of all felons in possession of firearms, also appears to have had an impact on that city's homicide rate.<sup>11</sup> Certainly we are not arguing that a ninety-day directed patrol experiment in one city answers the questions raised in the gun control debate. But the Indianapolis findings, along with these other studies and the practical experience in New York City and other jurisdictions, suggest that there are concrete actions that the police and other criminal justice agencies can take to reduce gun violence following targeted deterrence principles. While politicians debate adding to the existing 20,000 federal, state, and local gun laws, law enforcement strategies that can reduce gun violence appear to exist now.

### **Effect on the Community**

As noted earlier, the level of change in citizen attitudes from the period before directed patrol to that following directed patrol was quite modest. The findings did reveal a

<sup>10</sup> The Indianapolis program began in 1998 with major implementation in late 1998 and early 1999. Through July 31, 1999, homicides were down 35 percent from 1997 and 1998 levels. From April 1, 1999 through July 31, 1999, Indianapolis has experienced an approximate 65 percent reduction in homicides.

<sup>11</sup> Mandatory sentence enhancements for using a gun in a crime would seem to be a logical extension. Yet the research findings are mixed (contrast McDowall, Loftin, and Wiersema, 1992 with Marvell and Moody, 1995). Ktock (1997) suggests that the problem may be in the failure to apply mandatory enhancements and recommends discretionary add-on sentencing enhancements.

high level of citizen awareness and support for IPD's directed patrol effort. The results were consistent for both target areas and for whites and blacks. Two-thirds to three-quarters of the sample expressed favorable opinions and high levels of support for IPD.

Overall then there appeared to be support for directed patrol, and the implementation of aggressive patrol did not appear to generate negative perceptions of the police department. This result was particularly striking because the survey was conducted during a highly publicized trial of a small group of officers involved in a downtown incident between off-duty officers and two civilians. The incident was particularly damaging because of its alleged racial overtones.

Despite the large number of contacts between police and citizens, and the large number of citations and arrests, IPD officials found no reported citizen complaints tied to the directed patrol initiative. IPD took several steps in an attempt to prevent conflict from growing out of this aggressive police strategy. First, the deputy chief of each district attended community meetings and personally spoke with neighborhood leaders prior to implementation of directed patrol. He explained the project and its goals, and stated that the department would not implement the project if the community objected. Assured of support, at least from formal neighborhood leaders, the deputy chiefs asked these leaders to explain the project to neighborhood residents and to solicit community support. Second, the department provided adequate supervision to the project. A captain in each district was assigned to the project, and a team of sergeants directly supervised the officers, often arriving at the scene of traffic stops and investigations. Further, the captains and sergeants emphasized the project had to be implemented in a way that was respectful of the citizens with whom officers had contact.

***The deputy chief of each district attended community meetings and personally spoke with neighborhood leaders prior to implementation of directed patrol. He explained the project and its goals, and stated that the department would not implement the project if the community objected.***

The citizen survey results suggested that IPD was successful in implementing the project in a fashion that did not generate police-citizen conflict. Of course, the survey approach is unlikely to tap into the perceptions of the most disenfranchised members of the community. Thus, it does not reveal whether other citizens were critical of the increased level and nature of patrol in these areas. No evidence of such criticism currently exists, but it remains a possible effect of directed patrol efforts.

The findings in Indianapolis are very similar to those discovered in Kansas City (Shaw, 1995), and lend credence to the notion that properly implemented and supervised aggressive police patrol need not generate police-citizen conflict. The findings also gain support from a recent study of policing in two precincts of the South Bronx in New York City (Davis and Mateu-Gelabert, 1999). The researchers found that NYPD officers implemented aggressive policing styles, produced significant declines in crime, and witnessed a reduction in citizen complaints. The researchers attributed the combination of tough enforcement and improved police-citizen relations to the effective management employed in both precincts. Precinct commanders improved supervision, provided enhanced training, paired junior and senior officers, and rigorously monitored officers receiving citizen complaints.

The authors (1999: Executive Summary) concluded, "Their strong management allowed the residents of these neighborhoods to reap the benefits of lower crime rates while enjoying the benefits of respectful policing." In both Indianapolis and Kansas City similar effective management seems to have been put in place.

The Indianapolis and Kansas City findings also seem consistent with recent findings from Chicago. In view of the controversies that have emerged from the Diallo and Louima incidents in New York City and the concerns over racial profiling (e.g., Stone, 1999), one would expect dramatic differences between the perception of police among African-American residents and whites. Yet, with only a few exceptions, these differences were not observed in Indianapolis or in Kansas City. In Chicago, researchers found that differences in attitudes toward the police among blacks and whites disappeared once controls for neighborhood context were employed. As Sampson and Bartusch (1999) explain, "Once neighborhood economic disadvantage is taken into account, blacks' views are found to be similar to whites'. Blacks appear to be more cynical toward or dissatisfied with the police only because they are more likely to live where disadvantage is concentrated.... Racial differences disappear when neighborhood context is considered. Thus, residents' estrangement from the police is better explained by neighborhood context than race." Given that both the Indianapolis and Kansas City surveys were conducted within black and white neighborhoods, the lack of differences across race may not be as surprising as it first appeared.

***Effective police leadership, supervision and training, coupled with community consultation and collaboration at the neighborhood level would appear to be crucial to generating support for aggressive policing initiatives.***

These findings also suggest the importance of the neighborhood-based policing approach utilized in Indianapolis and Kansas City, and observed in the effective police management by NYPD in the South Bronx. Effective police leadership, supervision and training, coupled with community consultation and collaboration at the neighborhood level would appear to be crucial to generating support for aggressive policing initiatives.

**Weighing Costs and Benefits**

The budgeted cost for the directed patrol effort was \$120,000, which covered the overtime costs of officers working the detail. Apparently the full amount was not expended during the ninety-day project, but this figure appears to be the most accurate estimate of IPD's costs. We can estimate the benefits based on the reductions of homicides and the other offenses that were reduced in the north target area. The estimated cost savings come from a National Research Council study, which offers the most comprehensive assessment of the costs of crime (Cohen, Miller, and Rossman, 1994). The social costs include the criminal justice processing costs of the police, courts and corrections systems, as well as the loss of productivity of an incarcerated offender. The victimization costs include medical costs, property costs, loss of victim productivity, and pain and suffering. Social costs for murders are estimated at \$103,800 per incident, and for robbery and aggravated assault an estimated \$5,600 per incident. The victimization costs for murder are estimated at \$2.2 million per incident, and for robbery and aggravated assault are \$19,200 and \$16,500 per incident, respectively.

Based on these estimates, the prevention of one murder, and two robberies and aggravated

assaults more than offset the costs of \$120,000 for the directed patrol effort. This sum does not even include the more costly victimization costs. Further, the overall homicide findings and the north district results indicate that the reduction was considerably more than one less homicide and two fewer robberies and aggravated assaults (the net reduction in the north target area was six fewer homicides, sixteen fewer aggravated assaults with a gun, and twelve fewer armed robberies). Consequently from a cost-benefit perspective, the directed patrol experiment easily paid for itself. Further, these are conservative estimates in that the dollar values for the costs of crime are based on 1987 dollars. To account for inflation these estimates should be increased by approximately 35 to 40 percent (Cohen, Miller, and Rossman, 1994).

On the other hand, we do not account for additional system costs generated by the directed patrol initiative. Specifically, we do not have estimates of the costs associated with the arrests generated by directed patrol. Nor do we have an estimate of revenue generated by the large number of traffic citations issued. Absent all these dimensions we cannot provide a precise cost-benefit estimate. If the National Research Council costs of crime figures are accepted, however, the crime reductions experienced in the north target area appear to readily offset the project's costs.

*If the National Research Council costs of crime figures are accepted, however, the crime reductions experienced in the north target area appear to readily offset the project's costs.*

Conclusion

As noted at the outset, from an international perspective the crime problem in the United States is largely one of violent crime, particularly gun-related violence. Events such as the Columbine and other school shootings dramatically reinforce this point, and place the violent crime issue on the public policy agenda. Yet the school shootings also distort the picture of violent crime in America. Statistically, schools remain very safe environments. Firearms-related violence remains largely concentrated in the nation's urban centers, and in specific neighborhoods within those cities. Firearms-violence also disproportionately harms the African-American community. Despite the fact that the gap has narrowed a bit since 1993, blacks are victims of homicides at 6.8 times the rate of whites (McGarrell, 1999). Black males between eighteen to twenty-four years of age have a homicide rate of 143.4 per 100,000. This compares to a rate of 15.1 for white males in the same age range (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1999).

One does not need a crystal ball to predict large expenditures, for metal detectors placed in schools throughout the country. Yet it is impossible to predict where the thirty to forty school killings, spread over the nation's nearly 28,000 schools, will occur.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it is easy to predict that our sixty-five largest cities will generate approximately 7,000 homicides next year. The present study, along with the experiences in New York, Boston, Richmond, and

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<sup>1</sup> The *Annual Report on School Safety* (U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice, 1999) reported sixteen deaths during the 1993-94 school years. The National School Safety Center's *Report on School Safety - A Year of Deaths* (National School Safety Center, 1994) reported 27 violent deaths for the seven year period 1987-1993. This included thirty-one homicides. Thus, both reports indicate an average of approximately 12 deaths per year associated with the nation's kindergarten through grade 12 schools.

Kansas City, indicates that actions can be put into place immediately that will address this predictable urban violence. Specifically, directed police patrol at violent crime hot spots, aggressive enforcement of illegal weapons possession, and related targeted deterrence strategies show considerable promise. As political leaders debate new gun laws, V-chips, additional school counselors, and related issues, numbers like 1,400 fewer homicide victims per year in New York City, a reduction of twenty-five youth homicides to zero per year in Boston, and 40 and 50 percent reductions in Indianapolis and Kansas City, suggest the potential of currently available strategies to significantly reduce firearms violence in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> We recognize that we are comparing apples and oranges when we contrast directed police patrol and school safety measures. Metal detectors may be playing an important role in school safety, particularly in urban settings where they have most frequently been employed. On the other hand, concern with school safety issues should not divert attention from the larger problem of urban firearm violence.

## APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY

The research design utilized in this study consisted of a pre-post quasi-experimental design. Police activity data were recorded by the officers working directed patrol, submitted to their supervisor, and forwarded to the research team. Crime data were provided by the crime analysis unit. We compared the number of offenses occurring during the project period with the number from the same period of the prior year, thus controlling for seasonal effects. We also compared the trend in the target beats to the trend in the comparison beats and in the city generally (minus the target beats).

Data on firearms crime and on gun seizures were recorded by reading all the incident reports for the target and control beats. More than 10,000 incident reports were reviewed.

The overall trend in homicide, as well as the homicide trend in both the east and north target areas, was statistically significant when compared to the citywide trend (for east district it was only significant at the .10 level). North district's decline in gun assaults was statistically significant in comparison to the trend in both the comparison area and the citywide trend. The north target armed robbery trend was significant in contrast to the comparison area (only at .10).

The citizen survey employed a pre-post, random selection design and was administered in both target sites and the comparison site. Four hundred and twenty citizens completed the pre-intervention survey and 282 completed the post-intervention survey (67 percent retention rate).

Details on the methodology are available in McGarrell, Chermak, and Weiss (1999).

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## ABOUT THE CRIME CONTROL POLICY CENTER

The Crime Control Policy Center studies crime and justice issues with the goal of identifying innovative and effective strategies for reducing crime and sustaining and building safe neighborhoods and communities. Current work includes restorative justice practices, strategic responses to violent crime, reducing illegal drug use, and problem solving policing. The Center works in partnership with criminal justice agencies to identify and test promising strategies and to learn how to effectively implement these efforts in real world settings. Like a number of other Hudson Center's, the Crime Center takes a "hands-on approach" to its research working in partnership with law enforcement and related criminal justice agencies to analyze problems, craft and implement solutions, and evaluate and revise strategies.

In much of our work, Indianapolis has acted as a laboratory for testing innovative crime control strategies. Given our success, we are now taking the lessons learned locally and informing national and international audiences. We are also broadening our focus to work with other U.S. communities and internationally.

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Hudson Institute is a private, not-for-profit research organization founded in 1961 by the late Herman Kahn. Hudson analyzes and makes recommendations about public policy for business and government executives, as well as for the public at large. The institute does not advocate an express ideology or political position. However, more than thirty years of work on the most important issues of the day has forced a viewpoint that embodies skepticism about the conventional wisdom, optimism about solving problems, a commitment to free institutions and individual responsibility, an appreciation of the crucial role of technology in achieving progress, and an abiding respect for the importance of values, culture, and religion in human affairs.

## Key Findings

- The absolute number of illegal firearms seizures was quite similar in the two target areas (forty-two in the north, forty-five in the east). For the east target area, however, this represented a greater increase in firearms seizures (a 50 percent increase) than was the case in the north target area (an 8 percent increase).
- Homicides dropped from eleven to one in the two target areas when comparing the project period to the same period of the prior year. Beyond this, the effects were isolated to one of the two target areas. Specifically, the north target area experienced significant reductions in firearms crime. In contrast, there was little evidence of a decline in firearms crime in the east target area.
- The results suggest that the specific deterrence or targeted offender strategy was more effective in reducing violent gun crime than was a more general deterrence approach. That is, focusing on individuals and situations where the police have some degree of suspicion of criminal behavior was more effective than casting a broad net over a neighborhood. It may be that the targeted offender approach sends a message of increased surveillance, and removes firearms from those individuals most likely to engage in violent crime.
- There was a high level of citizen awareness and support for Indianapolis Police Department's directed patrol effort. The results were consistent for both target areas and for whites and blacks. Two-thirds to three-quarters of the sample expressed favorable opinions and high levels of support for IPD.

*Directed patrol in high-violent-crime locations can have a significant effect on violent crime.*

