

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENT ON NON-COMMITTED TIME

This assignment is given to supervisors one week prior to a working group meeting, coupled with the article "Changing the Culture of Uncommitted Patrol Time" by Jim Dermody in Translational Criminology (<http://cebcp.org/wp-content/TCmagazine/TC4-Spring2013>)

A. For those who supervise patrol units

This week, think about each person in your squad and jot down what types of activities they tend to do during the time they are NOT answering calls for service. These would be just activities related to their crime control and community-oriented functions (no need to talk about breaks/admin/etc.). Does each individual have a particular "style" and how would you describe it? Does your unit as a whole have certain tendencies with regard to its deployment style? How much total non-committed time does your squad typically have in a week (% of total time)?

B. For those who supervise uniformed/plain clothes units/specialized units who do not answer calls for service

This week, think about each person in your squad and jot down what types of activities they tend to engage in, either individually or with assigned partners. Be specific. Does each person/pair have a particular "style" and how would you describe it? Then: does your unit as a whole have certain tendencies with regard to its deployment style? What types of tactics and strategies does your unit tend to use most often and why do you use that particular tactic?

C. For those who supervise investigative or other types of units

This week, document what your unit tends to do on a daily basis given its particular charge. So for example, is the primary function of your unit to investigate offenses that come to the unit from patrol? Do you feel like your unit could do other things that might impact the crime problem to which you are assigned other than its current approach? What might those things be?

QUESTIONS DURING WORKING GROUP MEETING

1. What did the sergeants discover?
2. What should be the role of the sergeant in influencing these tendencies?
3. If non-committed time is not being used, what are some tangible ideas that the researcher can provide and how can those research-based ideas be translated into actions?

Changing the Culture of Uncommitted Patrol Time: A Work in Progress

BY JAMES DERMODY

James Dermody is a captain with the Seattle Police Department. He commands the West Precinct, which includes the city's downtown.

One longstanding characteristic of traditional 911-response patrol work is uncommitted time—the period during which an officer is neither responding to calls nor conducting related investigative work. Uncommitted time has been found in one high-crime city to be as high as 50 percent of an officer's shift (Famega, 2009). How officers use this time varies widely—both between officers and within agencies—from engaging in random or directed preventive patrol, community policing, and problem solving, to simply waiting for the next call. But as Lum (2012) has emphasized, this time is the “gold” of policing. Patrol officers typically have a large amount of unsupervised discretion, and how they exercise it can improve crime prevention and ultimately reduce calls for service and victimization in the first place.

As a patrol commander in Seattle, I do not believe that officers are “slave[s] to 911” (Kessler, 1993, p. 488). There is sufficient capacity within patrol to harness uncommitted time to strategically focus on concentrations of high crime and disorder. The challenge, of course, is in changing how officers traditionally patrol. How can patrol officers and their supervisors best tap into this “gold” on a consistent basis? What can they do to integrate evidence-based, proactive work at high-crime locations that have been stubbornly resistant to traditional deployment? Finally, what crime analytic, performance measurement, and management strategies can police agencies use to facilitate these fundamental changes to traditional patrol culture?

Such changes do not occur overnight. The Seattle Police Department (SPD) has been experimenting with these questions over the past five years and continues to work toward shifting its patrol strategy to a more proactive, evidence-based approach. In 2008, SPD developed a new deployment model called the Neighborhood Policing Plan, which was intended to reduce response time and more important, increase strategic proactive patrol during uncommitted time. The crux of this plan was a staffing formula that ensured an average seven-minute (or less) response time to priority one emergency calls, 30 percent “uncommitted” time capacity, and a minimum of 10 units free at all times citywide.

Our mayor and city council used this formula to approve a budget that added approximately 105 new officers over five years to achieve those metrics.¹ Prior to 2008, our agency—as did many agencies



James Dermody

around the country—assumed that supervisors were deploying their officers to locations where they were most needed during their free time. We also assumed these supervisors were equipped with the right knowledge, skills, and data to identify high crime and disorder locations and knew what tactics to deploy there. In fact, there was no consistent approach to using uncommitted time. The Neighborhood Policing Plan reflected the first step toward a different patrol approach. But how does an agency as large as SPD institutionalize these changes?

Jumpstarting Cultural Change by Targeting Problem Areas

In 2009, I was promoted to the rank of captain and given command of our East Precinct, which includes the four-square-mile Central District. Historically the home of Seattle's African American population, the Central District between the late 19th century through the 1970s is described by Taylor (1994, pp. 5-6) as being “defined by denial and exclusion.” Much has changed since the 1970s. In 1992, the area was recognized as one of the country's first Department of Justice Weed and Seed sites and continued in the program until it graduated in 2007. During this time, many strong police-community relationships were developed that continue to this day.

Although Part I crimes in the East Precinct had been dropping consistently since 2003, in 2008 to 2009, a portion of the Central District continued to suffer from gang activity and street drug sales. Residents were fearful. In early 2008, the homicide of a local restaurant owner by a known gang member drug dealer occurred at 23rd Avenue and East Union Street, an intersection with a long history of gangs, drug sales, and violent crime. My predecessor began working with community members and government organizations to develop what became our city's first Drug Market Initiative, focused partially on this portion of the Central District.² While the initiative was deemed successful, 23rd and Union saw an uptick in drug sales activity soon after.

1 See seattle.gov/police/programs/NPP.htm.

2 See seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2009619108_webdrugdealers07m.html.

Sensing that this period could be a positive tipping point, we initiated Operations Safe Union and Safer Union in early 2010 as a two-step approach to help the community take back the intersection for good. Safe Union was a 90-day buy-and-slide operation that developed multiple drug sales cases on 17 defendants, one of whom was charged federally. Safer Union was our four-month overt follow-up period, which included uniformed presence 16 hours per day, seven days per week. We worked directly with the community to help them hold the ground and make the intersection a destination rather than just a cross-roads.³ The end result was a substantial and sustained 70 percent decrease in crime at the intersection and surrounding blocks.⁴

Early and strong wins such as this one are key to convincing both officers and commanders that proactive approaches using data, place-based interventions, better use of uncommitted time, and community partnerships can work. We began to move to other locations in the precinct where sustained crime rates suggested resistance to traditional proactive work.

At the same time, developing interactions and partnerships with George Mason University and others brought external research to SPD. I received an early draft of the outcomes of the 2011 Sacramento Police pilot study testing the Koper Curve deployment principle (Telep et al., in press). Koper (1995, and now also at George Mason University) suggested that officers did not have to stay at hot spots for long periods to have deterrent effects. Indeed, spending just 12 to 15 minutes in a hot spot maximized the deterrent effect once they left. Also tested on the British Transit system (Ariel and Sherman, 2012), this principle was straightforward and easy to digest, and provided a practical framework for supervisors to schedule officers' time at predetermined hot spots for short spurts between calls for service. Instead of just driving through hot spots on the way to the next call, officers could get out of their cars, walk a beat, and interact with community members. Moreover, outcomes could be measured quickly, and we began seeing reductions in UCR Part I and II calls at those locations. Business owners and their employees appreciated officers stopping by and checking on them.



Captain James Dermody (right) with Mayor Michael McGinn (left) and Lieutenant Deanna Nollette

Last May, I was transferred to our downtown precinct to help spearhead SPD's role in our mayor's Center City Initiative.⁵ Again, we focused on using data-driven, evidence-based approaches to address the highest concentrations of crime and disorder in four key downtown neighborhoods, including the central business district, the region's economic engine. We identified the block face with the most crime and disorder in each neighborhood and directed our supervisors to follow the Koper Curve Principle. After three weeks, we found consistent reductions in 911 calls at our peak times (11 a.m. to 8 p.m.).⁶ Those successes have been sustained to this day. Moreover, after internal messaging and positive community feedback, Police Chief John Diaz directed *all* precincts to engage in this directed patrol strategy, which was publicly announced by the mayor this past September.⁷ Beginning in the first quarter of 2013, two of our five precincts will pilot additional data-driven efforts supported by PredPol, a patent-pending predictive policing tool that applies advanced mathematics to crime data to make weekly predictions in small geographic areas.⁸ We believe these expanded efforts to extract

3 See seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/localnews/2013775330_thecorner27m.html.

4 See http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2020384254_unionintwentythirdxml.html.

5 See www.seattle.gov/mayor/centercity.

6 See video, seattletimes.com/1729150260001/west-precinct-captain-jim-dermody-discusses-changes-in-police-patrols.

7 See seattletimes.com/html/editorials/2018683647_edit14crimehotspots.html.

8 See www.predpol.com.



Seattle at night

more value from the golden uncommitted time during patrol will allow us to emphasize even more a place-based approach to fighting crime and fear.

Changing Deployment Approaches Incrementally and Strategically

Our approach to changing the use of uncommitted patrol time began with early place-based directed actions by our officers, small wins, positive feedback loops, and dissemination of outcomes and efforts. We followed these early efforts with consistent refinement, reinforcement, and increased implementation of successful tactics. In total, this approach helped begin to institutionalize change in our patrol division's use of uncommitted time toward deployments that better reflected both data and policing research. A number of positive externalities—forces outside the police agency—substantially helped this process, most notably the city government's effort to support and understand the role of evidence-based policing in Seattle. City council members became interested in data-driven approaches, key personnel in the Office of the City Auditor engaged with our efforts, and Mayor McGinn and Chief Diaz helped engage and coordinate other city departments in crime prevention roles. These commitments by multiple people, units, and Seattle's community have all helped to generate a culture shift in patrol.

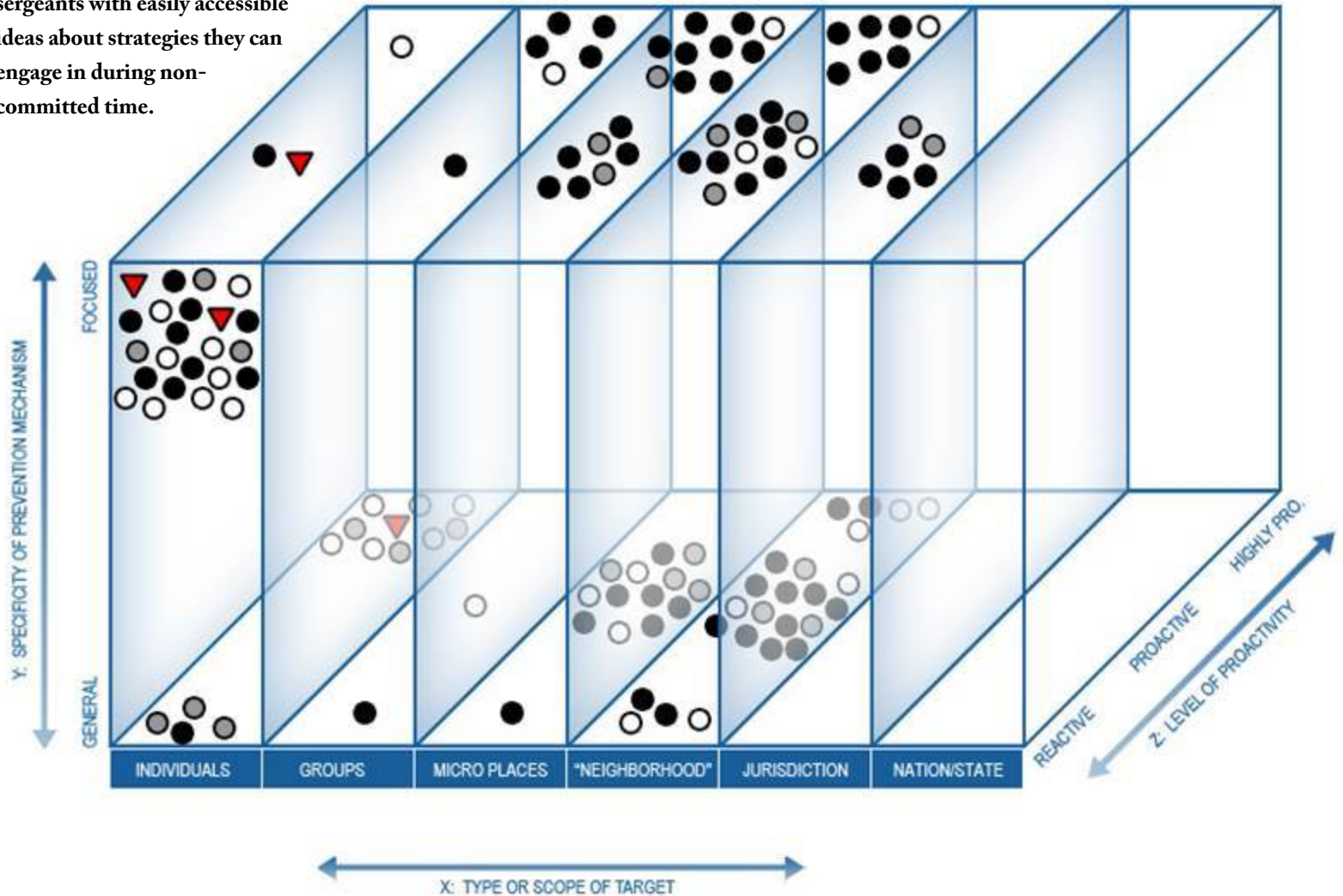
But the greatest satisfaction I feel, as both a lifelong resident and commander in Seattle, is reading messages such as the one that came across my mobile terminal while on night duty. A veteran officer sent a message to his squad reading (and I paraphrase), "Hey, this directed

patrol stuff really works. I was out on foot (in Chinatown) when [a citizen] came up to me and pointed out a guy selling dope on the next block. He was right!"

References

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- Koper, C. S. (1995). "Just Enough Police Presence: Reducing Crime and Disorderly Behavior by Optimizing Patrol Time in Crime Hot Spots." *Justice Quarterly* 12, 649–672.
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- Taylor, Q. (1994). *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Telep, C. W., R. J. Mitchell, and D. Weisburd. In press. "How Much Time Should the Police Spend at Crime Hot Spots? Answers from a Police Agency Directed Randomized Field Trial in Sacramento, California." *Justice Quarterly*.

Matrix pages are given to provide sergeants with easily accessible ideas about strategies they can engage in during non-committed time.



▼ Significant Backfire ○ Non-Significant Finding ● Mixed Results ● Significant/Effective

Some sample strategies to provide to sergeants.

3

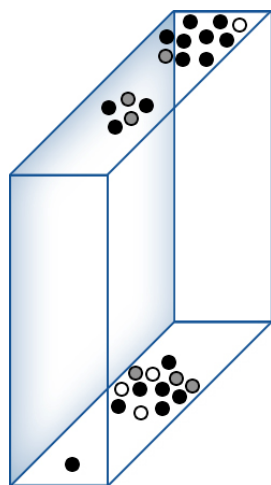
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The Matrix: Research on Micro Places

[The Matrix Home](#)
[Micro Places Home](#)
[Matrix Key](#)
[Inclusion Criteria & Methods Key](#)
[Results Key](#)


Micro-Places –Interventions which target very small geographic locations such as a block, street segment, alley, intersection specific address or cluster of addresses.

Click [here](#) for a PDF of all Matrix studies divided by slab (X-axis category).

Author	Intervention	Result	Rigor	Y-Axis	Z-Axis
Baker & Wolfer (2003)	Problem-oriented policing project in a park reduces fear and perceptions of drug use and vandalism		M	F	HP
Bichler et al. (2012)	Problem-oriented policing, focusing on outreach to motel owners and operators, code enforcement, and permit ordinance to increase pressure on uncooperative motel operators		M	F	P
Braga et al. (1999)	Problem-oriented policing in violent crime hot spots leads to reductions in violent and property crime, disorder and drug selling		VR	F	HP
Braga & Bond (2008)	Focus on hot spots of crime leads to reductions in crime and disorder calls for service		VR	F	P
Braga et al. (2012)	Safe Street Team problem-oriented policing project associated with a reduction in violent index crimes at treatment hot spots relative to comparison places		R	F	HP
Braga & Schnell (2013)	Situational, enforcement, and social service interventions at violent crime hot spots led to reduction in violent crimes		R	F	P
Chaiken et al. (1975)	Increased police on the New York Subways at night led to reduced crime		M	G	P
Corsaro et al. (2012)	Pulling levers intervention: Identification of drug and violence hot spots followed by notification and resource delivery to individuals convicted of nonviolent nonfelony crimes		R	F	P
Di Tella & Schargrodsky (2004)	Blocks that received extra police protection experienced significantly fewer car thefts than the rest of the neighborhoods.		R	G	R
Eck & Wartell (1998)	Property managers who have a meeting with police and threat of nuisance abatement report less crime, receiving letter somewhat effective in reducing crime		VR	F	HP
Hope (1994)	Case studies of problem-oriented policing and drug-market locations. Forced closure or sale of property reduced drug dealing		M	F	HP
Jim et al. (2006)	Community-oriented policing in a retail shopping center led to reduced perception of gang activity and fear of crime		M	G	P

				4			
Lawton et al. (2005)	Police officers on drug corners in Philadelphia led associated with significant localized intervention impacts for both violent and drug crimes.		M	G	P		
Mazerolle, Price et al. (2000)	The use of civil remedies and third party policing associated with reduced drug crime, especially in residential locations		VR	F	HP		
Mazerolle, Ready et al. (2000)	Problem-oriented policing in public housing associated with reductions in property and violent crime.		M	F	HP		
Ratcliffe et al. (2011)	Foot patrol associated with a significant decrease in crime in hot spots that reach a threshold level of pre-intervention violence		VR	G	P		
Sherman & Weisburd (1995)	Substantial increases in police patrol associated with reduction in total crime calls and more significant reduction in disorder at high crime hot spots		VR	G	P		
Taylor et al. (2011)- POP	Problem-oriented policing in hot spots associated with a 33% drop in "street violence" during the 90 days after the intervention		VR	F	HP		
Telep et al. (2012)	Spending approximately 15 minutes at treatment hot spots to reduce calls for service and crime incidents		VR	G	P		
Weisburd & Green (1995)	Crackdowns on drug hot spots reduced disorder; no effects on violence or property crime		VR	F	HP		
White & Katz (2013)	Problem-oriented policing at convenience store locations led to a 40% decline in calls for service at target stores.		M	F	P		
Armitage & Monchuk (2011)	Secured by Design (SBD) program to encourage builders to design out crime shows effectiveness in street-level comparisons but not when comparing SBD developments to non-SBD developments		M	F	HP		
Caplan et al. (2011)	Police monitored CCTV cameras more effective at reducing crime in some sites than others		M	G	P		
Koper et al. (2013)	Short-term patrols with LPR devices reduced different crimes depending on how the LPRs were used		VR	F	P		
La Vigne et al. (2011)-Baltimore	Police monitored CCTV cameras reduce crime in one Baltimore site, but not the other		R	G	P		
La Vigne et al. (2011)-Chicago	Police monitored CCTV cameras reduce crime in one Chicago site, but not the other		R	G	P		
Sherman & Rogan (1995)	Crack house raids reduced crime for about 12 days; crime reductions decayed quickly		VR	F	P		
Buerger (1994)	Problem-oriented policing in high crime addresses leads difference in calls for service in commercial treatment vs. control addresses, but small decline in residential calls in treatment area		VR	F	HP		
Lum et al. (2010)	Use of license plate readers mounted on patrol cars in autotheft hot spot areas not associated with declines in auto crime or crime generally in two jurisdictions		VR	G	P		
Taylor et al. (2011)- Saturation	Saturation/directed patrol in hot spots not associated with a significant decline in crime in the post-intervention period		VR	G	P		
Weiss & Freels (1996)	Aggressive traffic law enforcement had no impact on robbery or auto theft rates.		M	G	P		

More specific information about a strategy in the Matrix can be found in individual study links of the matrix.

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Micro Places – Telep et al. (2012)

[The Matrix Home](#)

[Micro Places Home](#)

[Matrix Key](#)

[Inclusion Criteria & Methods Key](#)

[Results Key](#)

Study Reference:

Telep, C.W., Mitchell, R.J., & Weisburd, D. (2014). How Much Time Should the Police Spend at Crime Hot Spots? Answers from a Police Agency Directed Randomized Field Trial in Sacramento, California. *Justice Quarterly*, 31, 905-933.

Location in the Matrix:

[Micro places](#), general, proactive

What police practice or strategy was examined?

This study tests the impact that officers can have on crime at hot spots when they spend about 15 minutes patrolling hot spots in a random order (Koper Curve principle). Each day, officers were assigned 1-6 hot spots in their patrol area and were given a random order in which to visit their hot spots. Officers were instructed to visit each of their hot spots for 12-16 minutes when not answering calls for service, and to try to visit each hot spot at least once every 2 hours. While officers were not given specific instructions on what to do while visiting hot spots, they did have daily access to suggested proactive activities through their in-car computers.

How was the intervention evaluated?

This study was carried by a police sergeant, crime analysis unit, and patrol officers of metropolitan police force. The sergeant identified 42 hot spots by examining crime-related calls for service. Hot spots were a street block in length (both sides of the street intersection to intersection). She then randomly assigned 21 of the 42 hot spots to receive the treatment for a 90-day period. She then examined three crime measures for all hot spots: calls for service, Part I crime incidents, and soft crimes incidents to see if treated hot spots show significant improvement compared to control spots.

What were the key findings?

Part I Crime incidents decreased 25% in the treatment hot spots compared to the control hot spots (where they rose 27%). Calls for service declined about 8% in the treatment group and increased about 11% in the control hot spots. Soft crime incidents increased in both the treatment and control hot spots, but the increase was greater in the treatment group. The increase in soft crimes may reflect the increase in officer time spent in the treatment hot spots, which provided officers with increased opportunities to write incident reports for disorder crimes. It could also be the case, however, that the hot spots treatment was not successful in reducing soft crimes.

What were the implications for law enforcement?

The authors suggest a significant overall impact of the hot spots treatment on total calls for service and Part I crime incidents, particularly when comparing the 90-day experiment to the same time period in 2010. This crime reduction effect could also be achieved by officers spending relatively little time in each hot spots. Finally, this study is an example of an in-house experimental evaluation that was conducted without grant funding.

Where can I find more information about this intervention, similar types of intervention, or related studies?

[All studies in the matrix on micro places](#)

[Braga, Papachristos, and Hureau's systematic review on hot spots policing effects on crime](#)

[Koper Curve Principle](#)

[Crimesolutions.gov Practice Profile: Hot Spots Policing](#)

[Information about hot spots policing](#)

[CEBCP Special Lectures and Research Clips: Putting hot spots research into practice- Chris Koper](#)