

2020

Focused Deterrence Violence Prevention At Community And Individual Levels

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FOCUSED DETERRENCE VIOLENCE PREVENTION AT COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL LEVELS

EDMUND F. MCGARRELL*

The focused deterrence violence prevention model emerged as part of Boston Ceasefire in the mid-1990s. Since that time, solid research evidence has emerged indicating focused deterrence can influence community levels of violence, particularly gang- and group-related violence. It is considered an evidence-based violence reduction strategy. The evidence of the impact on individuals, however, is much more limited and mixed. This Article presents the focused deterrence model, reviews the research evidence and considers the implications for reducing violent recidivism. Several lingering research questions as well as considerations for leveraging focused deterrence along with other recidivism reduction strategies are discussed.

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I. INTRODUCTION

As national homicide and violent crime trends peaked in the early 1990s¹, policymakers and criminal justice professionals searched for strategies that could prevent and reduce levels of violent crime and gun-crime. Common thinking among many criminologists was that crime trends were largely driven by macro-level social and economic forces and there was little that could be done in a planned and purposive fashion to reduce serious violence.² In this context, a multi-agency, problem solving initiative emerged in Boston focused on reducing youth firearms violence. Known as Boston Ceasefire, this problem-solving team developed what has come to be known as the focused deterrence model of violence prevention. Most telling, the evaluation of Boston Ceasefire produced eye-catching results. Youth gun crime dropped by an estimated 60% and the city went two and a half years without a youth homicide.³ Since that time, evidence of the impact of the focused deterrence model has grown.

This Article describes the focused deterrence model, reviews the research evidence indicating a violence reduction effect, and considers the extent to which focused deterrence holds potential to reduce incarceration and recidivism.

II. FOCUSED DETERRENCE MODEL

The multi-agency team that developed Boston Ceasefire was also notable because it included a research partnership with a group of researchers at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.⁴ The researcher-practitioner team followed a problem-solving model where they used data and intelligence to better understand what was driving youth firearms violence; developed strategies; assessed and refined the strategies; and ultimately evaluated the impact on youth violence. The research team was led by David Kennedy, who is considered the architect of the focused deterrence model.⁵

1. See FRANKLIN E. ZIMRING & GORDON HAWKINS, *CRIME IS NOT THE PROBLEM: LETHAL VIOLENCE IN AMERICA* 57 (Oxford Univ. Press 1997).

2. An example of such thinking was offered by a Korean graduate student who stated: "crime affects criminal justice; criminal justice does not affect crime." DAVID E. DUFFEE, *EXPLAINING CRIMINAL JUSTICE: COMMUNITY THEORY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM* xiii (1980).

3. Anthony A. Braga, David M. Kennedy, Elin J. Waring, & Anne M. Piehl, *Problem-Oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire*, 38 J. RES. CRIME & DELINQ. 195, 205, 207 (2001).

4. See *id.* at 196.

5. See generally DAVID M. KENNEDY, *DETERRENCE AND CRIME PREVENTION: RECONSIDERING THE PROSPECT OF SANCTION* 3 (2009).

In the focused deterrence model, the “focus” is on the individuals and groups believed to be at highest risk for being involved in gun violence.⁶ Crime analysis and street level intelligence is used to analyze violent crime to identify the groups currently involved in violence.⁷ Recognizing that much street violence involves ongoing conflicts, disputes over drug selling and other illicit activities, and retaliatory violence, the model suggests that continued violence is predictable and therefore seeks to interrupt these cycles of violence.⁸ The mechanism for interrupting these patterns is direct communication with high risk individuals, gangs, and groups.⁹ Most commonly this is done through what has come to be known as a “call-in” meeting.¹⁰ Over time, focused deterrence practitioners have increasingly supplemented call-ins with “custom notifications.”¹¹ Both techniques seek to deliver a focused deterrence message, but the difference is that call-in meetings seek communication with groups of high-risk individuals whereas custom notifications are typically delivered to one individual.¹²

The message delivered in both call-ins and custom notifications is a key element of the focused deterrence model.¹³ Themes include:

- Based on your behavior and who you are hanging with, we believe you are at high risk of being involved in violence, as both victim and offender.
- We are here to let you know that the level of violence is unacceptable and we (local, state, and federal law enforcement, prosecutors, probation/parole, and community partners) are committed to do everything possible to reduce the violence.
- If you and your associates continue to be involved in violence, we are going to do everything legally and ethically possible to get you off the streets and impose all available sanctions.
- We are holding you, and your associates, responsible for any violence connected to your group.¹⁴

6. *Id.* at 123.

7. *Id.* at 114.

8. *Id.* at 114–15.

9. *Id.* at 134–36.

10. *Id.* at 155, 162.

11. *See, e.g., id.* at 134–35, 155–56.

12. *Id.* at 134–35.

13. *See id.* at 123–24.

14. *Id.* at 134–35.

Examples of other groups and individuals who have been subject to enforcement, or who have been shot or murdered, are offered to make the deterrence message credible.¹⁵ Typically, this includes detailed description of available sanctions with an emphasis on federal laws related to felons possessing and using firearms.¹⁶

The deterrence theme often ends with a message of, “we hope you will make other choices and that we will not see you in jail, court, or a morgue.” At this point, the deterrence message shifts to themes of community and social support. This typically involves the “voice of pain” whereby community members who have been harmed by gun violence describe the real impact of gun violence.¹⁷ This usually involves a message of, “I don’t want to see other people go through what I have experienced, and I don’t want to see you shot or in prison.” Finally, offers of social support are communicated.¹⁸ This involves describing services that are available (mentoring, job preparation, identification and driver’s licenses, job placement, drug treatment, housing, etc.).¹⁹ Often, this message is communicated by outreach workers who are frequently people who previously were involved in crime and violence but who have turned their lives around.²⁰ These same themes are included in custom notifications though these are not as detailed as the call-in meeting.²¹

An additional key component of the model is follow-up to the meeting.²² This includes an enforcement response to violent incidents believed to be associated with individuals and groups who have received the focused deterrence message as well as their associates.²³ This is described as the “pulling levers” strategy whereby the deterrence message is made credible through a wide variety of enforcement actions (e.g., warrant service; probation/parole home visits; directed police patrol, etc.).²⁴ Similarly, emphasis is placed on delivering social services to those who seek to avail

15. *Id.* at 3, 27–28.

16. *Id.* at 124–25.

17. *Id.* at 3.

18. *Id.*

19. *Id.*

20. *Id.* at 136, 140.

21. *See id.* 134–41. An excellent description of the call-in and overall model as applied to gang and group violence is provided in, Nicholas Corsaro & Robin S. Engel, *Most Challenging of Contexts: Assessing the Impact of Focused Deterrence on Serious Violence in New Orleans*, 14 *CRIMINOLOGY & PUB. POL’Y* 471, 474 (2015).

22. KENNEDY, *supra* note 5, at 136–39.

23. *Id.*

24. Corsaro & Engel, *supra* note 21, at 474.

themselves of such support.²⁵ This often involves partnerships with a variety of service providers and coordination by outreach workers to help connect call-in and custom notification participants to services.²⁶

Multiple criminological theories underlie the focused deterrence message.²⁷ Concepts of specific and general deterrence are modified into focused deterrence through the idea of direct communication to high risk individuals and groups. Social support and opportunity are key elements, and significant attention is given to communicating in a respectful fashion consistent with procedural justice theory.²⁸ The engagement of the community and former offenders is consistent with efforts to build collective efficacy.

The most common application of the focused deterrence message is to gang- and group-related violence. This also attempts to take advantage of informal social networks with the idea that participants in call-ins and custom notifications will spread the word to associates. As described in the subsequent Section, the research foundation for focused deterrence is most compelling in terms of a reduction of gang- and group-related violence measured at the community level. The focused deterrence model has also been extended to drug market violence, chronic violent offenders, prisoner re-entry and intimate partner violence. Here, the research is promising but the evidence is less extensive. This research foundation and some of the lingering policy questions are discussed in the next sections.

III. THE EVIDENCE FOR THE FOCUSED DETERRENCE VIOLENCE PREVENTION MODEL

Following the success of Boston Ceasefire, a number of cities implemented the focused deterrence model. Most commonly this involved application to gang- and group-violence. Early studies were conducted in Los Angeles, Indianapolis, Lowell, and Stockton.²⁹ Since these early studies, additional

25. *Id.* at 479–80.

26. *Id.* at 475, 479.

27. KENNEDY, *supra* note 5, at 9–14.

28. Anthony A. Braga, David Weisburd, & Brandon Turhcan, *Focused Deterrence Strategies and Crime Control: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Evidence*, 17 *CRIMINOLOGY & PUB. POL'Y* 205, 213, 240 (2018).

29. *See, e.g.*, GEORGE E. TITA, K. JACK RILEY, GREG RIDGEWAY, & PETER W. GREENWOOD, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, *REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE: OPERATION CEASEFIRE IN LOS ANGELES* (2005) (Los Angeles); Anthony A. Braga, *Pulling Levers Focused Deterrence Strategies and the Prevention of Gun Homicide*, 36 *J. CRIM. JUST.* 332, 332 (2008) (Stockton); Anthony A. Braga, Jack McDevitt, & Glen L. Pierce, *Understanding and Preventing Gang Violence: Problem Analysis and Response Development in Lowell, Massachusetts*, 9 *POLICE Q.* 20, 22 (2006) (Lowell); Anthony A. Braga, Glen L. Pierce, Jack McDevitt, Brenda J. Bond, & Shea Cronin, *The Strategic Prevention of Gun Violence*

evaluations have emerged along with several systematic reviews of research evidence of focused deterrence.³⁰ As will be discussed, most of the studies and the most consistent evidence comes from evaluations of the gang- and group-strategy and its impact at a community level (e.g., police precincts, neighborhoods, city). Much less research has focused on strategies aimed at high-risk individuals, re-entry, or intimate partner violence. Similarly, research has tended to focus on impact at the community level as opposed to impact on individuals. The following Section reviews this evidence.

A. *Impact at the Community Level*

Braga, Weisburd and colleagues have provided a great service through their systematic reviews of evaluation studies of focused deterrence programs.³¹ The reviews include screening criteria where only studies meeting criteria for research rigor are included. The following section draws heavily on these reviews, supplemented with several more recent studies.

As noted above, the most extensive research and evidence comes from evaluations of the gang- and group-strategy examining impact at the community level.³² Braga, Weisburd, and Turchan report a dozen studies with consistent findings of reduced violence at the community level.³³ Outcome measures typically included homicides, fatal and nonfatal shootings, shooting victimization, and/or other violent crime indicators.³⁴ These studies also reported the highest effect sizes.³⁵

The second largest group of studies focused on the Drug Market Intervention (DMI).³⁶ The DMI focused deterrence strategy is very similar to

Among Gang-Involved Offenders, 25 JUST. Q. 132, 134, 137–38 (2008) (Lowell); Edmund F. McGarrell, Steven Chermak, Jeremy M. Wilson, & Nicholas Coraro, *Reducing Homicide Through a “Lever-Pulling” Strategy*, 23 JUST. Q. 214 (2006) (Indianapolis).

30. See, e.g., Anthony A. Braga & David L. Weisburd, *The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Evidence*, 49 J. RES. CRIME & DELINQ. 323, 323–24 (2012); Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28.

31. See, e.g., Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28; Braga & Weisburd, *supra* note 30.

32. Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28, at 209; Braga & Weisburd, *supra* note 30, at 326–27.

33. Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28, at 220–28.

34. *Id.*

35. *Id.* at 232–34.

36. NATALIE KROOVAND HIPPLE & EDMUND F. MCGARRELL, BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE, DRUG MARKET INITIATIVE: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE AND LESSONS LEARNED 2 (2012), https://psn.cj.msu.edu/tta/DMI-LessonsLearned_05-8-2014.pdf [<https://perma.cc/PU9W-85Z6>].

the gang- and group-strategy. Distinctions include that the focus is on people involved in a specific illegal drug market; and undercover drug enforcement operations are used to build cases on people involved in drug sales that are then held open as a way of making the deterrence message very credible.³⁷ The DMI strategy also includes intentional efforts at community engagement to provide a community voice (“we are tired of the drug dealing and the violence it brings”) as well as to build collective efficacy to sustain the short-term impact over time.³⁸ Nine studies of DMI interventions are included in the review.³⁹ Overall, they demonstrate reduced violence at the community level, though the results are uneven across the nine studies.⁴⁰ The mixed results are believed to indicate challenges associated with implementing the DMI model.⁴¹

Several additional studies examine impact at the community level. Clark-Moorman, Rydberg, and McGarrell studied the impact of a gun-involved re-entry program in Rockford, Illinois.⁴² The re-entry program focused on individuals with a history of being involved in gun violence who were returning to the community from prison.⁴³ These parolees were ordered to a call-in meeting shortly after release to Rockford.⁴⁴ The call-in meeting included the same themes described above but with a welcome home.⁴⁵ Clark-Moorman, Rydberg, and McGarrell report a significant decline in both firearms and non-firearms violence at the city level.⁴⁶

37. *Id.* at 3–4.

38. Collective efficacy refers to neighborhood social bonds and informal social control. *See* ROBERT J. SAMPSON, *GREAT AMERICAN CITY: CHICAGO AND THE ENDURING NEIGHBORHOOD EFFECT* 152–54 (2012).

39. Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28, at 220–28.

40. *Id.* at 223–28, 234.

41. *Id.* at 240–41; *see also* JESSICA SAUNDERS, ALLISON J. OBER, BEAU KILMER, & SARAH MICHAL GREATHOUSE, RAND, *A COMMUNITY-BASED, FOCUSED-DETERRENCE APPROACH TO CLOSING OVERT DRUG MARKETS: A PROCESS AND FIDELITY EVALUATION OF SEVEN SITES* 58–69 (2016).

42. *See* Kyleigh Clark-Moorman, Jason Rydberg, & Edmund F. McGarrell, *Impact Evaluation of a Parolee-Based Focused Deterrence Program on Community-Level Violence*, 30 *CRIM. JUST. POL’Y REV.* 1408, 1409 (2018).

43. *Id.* at 1413–14.

44. *Id.* at 1413.

45. *Id.* at 1414.

46. *Id.* at 1416–22. The Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership focused deterrence program conducted a pilot application to re-entry that was quite similar in concept to the Rockford program. *See* Edmund F. McGarrell, Duren Banks, & Natalie Hipple, *Community Meetings as a Tool in Inmate Reentry*, *JUST. RES. & POL’Y*, Dec. 2003, at 14–17. The results were considered promising as individuals returning to the community with prior violent crime experience who participated in the

Similar results emerge from Chicago's Project Safe Neighborhoods focused deterrence strategy. This also involved parolee forums but, in this case, parolees were eligible if they were released within nine months of the call-in.⁴⁷ Consequently, Braga, Weisburd, and Turchan treat this as an example of a focus on high-risk individuals as opposed to a re-entry program.⁴⁸ The study found significant reductions in homicides in the Chicago police divisions that participated in the program.⁴⁹

In addition to several DMI studies believed to involve implementation problems, two studies examining impact at the community level did not follow the pattern of finding a violence reduction. Newark's Operation Ceasefire focused on high risk gang members but through a "hybrid" design that emphasized street outreach.⁵⁰ Braga, Weisburd, and Turchan treated this as a high-risk individual focused deterrence program.⁵¹ The study found no reduction in gunshot injuries.⁵² Kansas City's No Violence Alliance initiative was a gang- and group-focused deterrence initiative.⁵³ The evaluators found short term violence reduction but that it was not sustained over time.⁵⁴ This point will be returned to subsequently.⁵⁵

B. *Impact at the Gang- and Group-Level*

Recognizing that the focus of many focused deterrence programs is reducing gang- and group-related violence, several studies examined whether the strategy reduced gang- and group-violence specifically. The original Indianapolis findings were re-examined to determine whether gang homicides were reduced following the implementation of the Indianapolis Violence

call-in re-entry meetings "survived" longer before re-offending. *Id.* at 27. However, overall there was no reduction in re-offending and the author's urged caution given a small sample size. *Id.* at 27–28.

47. Andrew V. Papachristos, Tracey L. Meares, & Jeffrey Fagan, *Attention Felons: Evaluating Project Safe Neighborhoods in Chicago*, 4 J. EMPIRICAL LEGAL STUD. 223, 247–48 (2007).

48. See Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28, at 223.

49. Papachristos, Meares, & Fagan, *supra* note 47, at 265.

50. Douglas J. Boyle, Jennifer L. Lanterman, Joseph E. Pascarella, Chia-Cherng Cheng, *The Impact of Newark's Operation Ceasefire on Trauma Center Gunshot Wound Admissions*, JUST. RES. & POL'Y, Dec. 2010, at 105, 106–07.

51. Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28, at 226.

52. Boyle, Lanterman, Pascarella, & Cheng, *supra* note 50, at 118.

53. Andrew M. Fox & Kenneth J. Novak, *Collaborating to Reduce Violence: The Impact of Focused Deterrence in Kansas City*, 21 POLICE Q. 283, 288 (2018).

54. *Id.* at 302.

55. See *infra* Section IV.D.

Reduction Partnership's focused deterrence program.⁵⁶ Corsaro and McGarrell found that, indeed, the greatest component of the homicide decline was gang-related homicides.⁵⁷ A group of scholars at the University of Cincinnati developed the concept of distinguishing gang- and group-member (GMI) homicides and non-fatal shootings as a more direct outcome measure of the gang- and group-focused deterrence strategy. They found significant reductions in GMI homicides and firearms incidents as part of the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence.⁵⁸ They later extended this same methodology to a study of the New Orleans Group Violence Reduction Strategy, a focused deterrence initiative aimed at gang- and group-violence. The results were very similar with significant reductions in GMI homicides.⁵⁹

Several additional researchers took this idea a step further and examined the impact on gangs and groups involved in a focused deterrence program compared to other gangs and groups not touched by the program. In Boston, total shootings declined over 30% for "treatment" gangs when contrasted with shootings by comparable non-treatment gangs.⁶⁰ Similar results emerged in a study of Chicago's Group Violence Reduction focused deterrence initiative. Specifically, the study reported a 23% reduction in gun crime and a 32% reduction in gunshot victimization for gangs involved in the focused deterrence program.⁶¹

When combined with the above section on the gang- and group-focused deterrence strategy impact at the community level, there is strong evidence supporting this strategy for impact at the community-, gang-, and group-levels.

56. Nicholas Corsaro & Edmund F. McGarrell, *Testing a Promising Homicide Reduction Strategy: Reassessing the Impact of the Indianapolis "Pulling Levers" Intervention*, 5 J. EXPERIMENTAL CRIMINOLOGY 63, 69 (2009).

57. *Id.* at 78–79; see also Nicholas Corsaro & Edmund F. McGarrell, *Reducing Homicide Risk in Indianapolis Between 1997 and 2000*, 87 J. URB. HEALTH 851, 861–62 (2010).

58. Robin S. Engel, Marie Skubak Tillyer, & Nicholas Corsaro, *Reducing Gang Violence Using Focused Deterrence: Evaluating the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)*, 30 JUST. Q. 403, 430–31 (2013).

59. Corsaro & Engel, *supra* note 21, at 486–87.

60. Anthony A. Braga, David M. Hureau, & Andrew V. Papachristos, *Deterring Gang-Involved Gun Violence: Measuring the Impact of Boston's Operation Ceasefire on Street Gang Behavior*, 30 J. QUANTITATIVE CRIMINOLOGY 113, 134 (2014).

61. Andrew V. Papachristos & David S. Kirk, *Changing the Street Dynamic: Evaluating Chicago's Group Violence Reduction Strategy*, 14 CRIMINOLOGY & PUB. POL'Y 525, 550–51 (2015).

C. *Impact at the Individual Level*

1. Re-entry

The Chicago Project Safe Neighborhoods program included a focus on individuals believed to be at high risk for violent re-offending. Specifically, this focused deterrence strategy included a re-entry program whereby individuals returning to the community from prison (within three to six months of release), with a history of gun violence, were required by their parole agents to attend a call-in meeting.⁶² The call-in was quite similar to that described in the gang-focused deterrence call-ins, but attention was made to welcome the participants back to the community and to recognize that they had largely completed their sentences (“debt to society”).⁶³ Additionally, heavy emphasis was placed on describing and encouraging available services to assist in the transition back to the community.⁶⁴ Significant attention was given to balance the deterrence message with themes of procedural justice and legitimacy.⁶⁵ The evaluation of this Chicago Project Safe Neighborhoods program found that parolees attending the call-ins experienced a significant reduction in recidivism.⁶⁶

2. Intimate Partner Violence

The community of High Point, North Carolina, utilized the focused deterrence strategy to address gang- and group-violence, street robberies, and drug market related violence. They gained further attention through the application of the focused deterrence strategy to the problem of intimate partner violence. In brief, the strategy involves a graduated sanction approach to intimate partner violence offenders and couples this with attempts to link

62. Danielle Wallace, Andrew V. Papachristos, Tracey Meares, & Jeffrey Fagan, *Desistance and Legitimacy: The Impact of Offender Notification Meetings on Recidivism Among High Risk Offenders*, 33 JUST. Q. 1237, 1243–44 (2016).

63. *See id.* at 1244.

64. *Id.* at 1246.

65. *Id.* at 1244.

66. *Id.* at 1259. The Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership focused deterrence program conducted a pilot application to re-entry that was quite similar in concept to the Chicago and Rockford programs. McGarrell, Banks, & Hipple, *supra* note 46, at 14–17. The results were considered promising as individuals returning to the community with prior violent crime experience who participated in the call-in re-entry meetings “survived” longer before re-offending. *Id.* at 27. However, overall there was no reduction in re-offending and the author’s urged caution given a small sample size. *Id.*

victims to services and to provide protective measures to victims.⁶⁷ One initial study of the focused deterrence intimate partner violence strategy has been conducted. After one year, there was a 20% decline in intimate partner violence arrests and calls for police service.⁶⁸ Victim injuries also declined.⁶⁹ Just under 17% of the targeted offenders had been re-arrested within twelve months of the focused deterrence notification.⁷⁰ The recidivism results are difficult to interpret due to the lack of an available comparison group. Overall, however, the results are promising and support continued experimentation and evaluation of the intimate partner focused deterrence strategy.⁷¹

3. Gang-, Group- and High-Risk People Strategy Impact at Individual Level

Several studies have examined the effects of the focused deterrence strategy on individuals based on either the gang-group strategy or the high-risk people strategy.

The Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership included evaluations of the impact on individuals participating in call-in meetings based on the gang- and group-focused deterrence strategy.⁷² The participants were chosen based on the belief that their prior involvement in gun crime and their gang- and group-associations put them at high risk for continued involvement in gun crime.⁷³ Although the research team found significant declines in homicides and gun assaults at the community level, they did not find that call-in attendees were less likely to re-offend when compared to a similar group of probationers and parolees.⁷⁴

One of the limitations of the evaluation and a challenge for all assessments of individual effects of focused deterrence, however, was that it was difficult to develop a comparison group. Although the comparison group of probationers and parolees had similar criminal histories, the participants in the call-in meetings were purposefully selected based on their gang connections and

67. Stacy M. Sechrist & John D. Weil, *Assessing the Impact of a Focused Deterrence Strategy to Combat Intimate Partner Domestic Violence*, 24 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 243, 247–48 (2018).

68. *Id.* at 251.

69. *Id.* at 260.

70. *Id.* at 259.

71. *Id.* at 263.

72. Steven Chermak & Edmund McGarrell, *Problem-Solving Approaches to Homicide: An Evaluation of the Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership*, 15 CRIM. JUST. POL'Y REV. 161, 166 (2004).

73. *Id.* at 168.

74. *Id.* at 182.

perceived high risk.⁷⁵ To address this issue, a randomized controlled experiment was conducted as a follow-up.⁷⁶

The experiment was also designed to address the relative effectiveness of two slightly different variations in the call-in meeting.⁷⁷ The first meeting type was that most akin to the traditional focused deterrence call-in and was labeled the focused deterrence meeting.⁷⁸ The second meeting type put a greater emphasis on the impact of violence in the community as well as more in-depth discussion of available services and encouragement to access such services.⁷⁹ These were labeled community meetings.⁸⁰ Eligible probationers and parolees were randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions: focused deterrence meeting, community meeting, or standard probation/parole with no call-in meeting.⁸¹ The results found no difference among the three groups.⁸² There were no differences in the number of new arrests, convictions, or the length of time to new offense.⁸³ The lead researcher, however, offered a caveat in interpreting the results.⁸⁴ Specifically, the experiment occurred at a time that the Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership had already witnessed significant declines in community homicides and firearms violence.⁸⁵ There had been several changes in key leadership of the focused deterrence team.⁸⁶ This raised the question of whether the strategy was still being implemented with the same dosage and intensity that it was when firearms violence was considered at extreme levels in Indianapolis.⁸⁷ Thus, it was difficult to discern whether the lack of an impact was due to a limit in the model itself or to the level of implementation intensity and fidelity at the time of the evaluation.

One international study examined the effect of the high-risk individuals focused deterrence strategy on youth violence. This study from Glasgow, Scotland examined the impact on youth weapon carrying and found a

75. *Id.* at 168.

76. STEVEN CHERMAK, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, REDUCING VIOLENT CRIME AND FIREARMS VIOLENCE: THE INDIANAPOLIS "LEVER-PULLING" EXPERIMENT 5-6 (2008).

77. *Id.* at 5.

78. *Id.*

79. *Id.*

80. *Id.*

81. *Id.* at 5-6.

82. *Id.* at 8.

83. *Id.*

84. *See id.* at 12-15.

85. *Id.* at 4-5.

86. *See id.* at 13-14.

87. *See id.* at 14.

significant reduction in weapon carrying among youths participating in the focused deterrence program.⁸⁸

Two more recent studies have examined the individual-level effects of the focused deterrence strategy. The first also involved a randomized experiment of a program known as “Regional Analytics for the Safety of our Residents” (RASOR) in three Massachusetts communities.⁸⁹ This program involved the application of the focused deterrence strategy applied to high-risk individuals.⁹⁰ Police reports were used to develop a “social harm risk index.”⁹¹ The social harm index was based on criminal histories and prioritized individuals involved in gun, gang, and drug offenses and considered how current the offending patterns were.⁹² The social harm index was used to identify what were considered the highest risk individuals in the three communities.⁹³ The experimental design was then used to assign these high-risk individuals to either a focused deterrence call-in meeting or the comparison group that received no unusual law enforcement attention.⁹⁴ An interesting addition to the model was that the treatment group was assigned to a police-social worker case management team that attempted to work with the individuals following the call-in meeting to engage with social services.⁹⁵ The results of the experiment were consistent with those described above in the Indianapolis experiment. There was no difference in the outcome measure, time to new arraignment, between the treatment and comparison groups.⁹⁶

More promising results emerge from a recent study of the individual effects of the gang- and group-focused deterrence strategy in Detroit. Like many of the above studies, the Detroit focused deterrence study had found declines in community levels of violence associated with the strategy.⁹⁷ The initial analysis

88. D.J. Williams, D. Currie, W. Linden, & P.D. Donnelly, *Addressing Gang-Related Violence in Glasgow: A Preliminary Pragmatic Quasi-Experimental Evaluation of the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV)*, 19 *AGGRESSION & VIOLENT BEHAV.* 686, 687–88 (2014).

89. Craig D. Uchida, Marc Swatt, Julie Schnobrich-Davis, Christine Connor, Mariel Shutinya, & Daniel Wagner, *A Randomized Control Trial of a Targeted High-Risk Offender Program Across Three Jurisdictions*, 22 *POLICE Q.* 192, 193 (2019).

90. *Id.*

91. *Id.* at 197.

92. *Id.*

93. *Id.*

94. *Id.* at 197–98.

95. *Id.* at 198.

96. *Id.* at 209.

97. GIOVANNI CIRCO, EDMUND F. MCGARRELL, JULIE M. KRUPA, & ALAINA DE BIASI, U.S. DEP'T OF JUSTICE, *DETROIT CEASEFIRE: FINAL EVALUATION REPORT* 33 (2018), <https://www.jrsa.org/pubs/sac-digest/vol-29/mi-detroit-ceasefire.pdf> [<https://perma.cc/4699-34Q2>].

of individual level effects was similar to the first Indianapolis study described above.⁹⁸ That is, it compared participants in call-in meetings with a group of probationers/parolees who were similar in terms of age, gender, race, and prior criminal histories.⁹⁹ There were few differences found in terms of recidivism.¹⁰⁰ However, the research team noted that the treatment group was different than the comparison group because they were selected on the basis of their associations with gangs and groups involved in firearms violence and thus were likely at higher risk than the comparison group.¹⁰¹

In a follow-up, the research team was able to limit the comparison group of probationers and parolees to those with gang- and group-affiliations.¹⁰² In this way, the treatment and comparison groups were considered much more equivalent in terms of their level of risk for subsequent offending. The results found that the call-in treatment group had significantly longer survival rates (time to new offense) for all crimes as well as for violent crimes specifically.¹⁰³ Initially, the treatment group was more likely to be re-arrested for a weapons offense but the researchers thought this likely reflected the proactive enforcement of the focused deterrence strategy that included enforcement responses to violent crime incidents as well as increased home visits to probationers and parolees involved in the focused deterrence program.¹⁰⁴ Over time, the control group witnessed higher levels of weapons offenses compared to the treatment group involved in the focused deterrence initiative.¹⁰⁵

IV. IMPLICATIONS/QUESTIONS

As described above, the evidence supporting the focused deterrence model is primarily at the community level. That is, communities, whether

98. See CHERMAK, *supra* note 76; Chermak & McGarrell, *supra* note 72.

99. CIRCO, MCGARRELL, KRUPA, & DE BIASI, *supra* note 97, at 27.

100. *Id.* at 32.

101. *Id.* at 34. The elevated risk associated with participation in gangs and “co-offending shooting networks” has been documented in abundant research. See, e.g., Chris Melde & Finn-Aage Esbensen, *Gangs and Violence: Disentangling the Impact of Gang Membership on the Level and Nature of Offending*, 29 J. QUANTITATIVE CRIMINOLOGY 143, 160 (2013); Andrew V. Papachristos, Christopher Wildeman, & Elizabeth Roberto, *Tragic, But Not Random: The Social Contagion of Nonfatal Gunshot Injuries*, 125 SOC. SCI. & MED. 139, 147 (2015); David C. Pyrooz, Richard K. Moule Jr., & Scott H. Decker, *The Contribution of Gang Membership to the Victim–Offender Overlap*, 51 J. RES. CRIME & DELINQ. 315, 334 (2014).

102. Giovanni Circo, Julie M. Krupa, Edmund McGarrell, & Alaina DeBiasi, *The Individual-Level Deterrent Effect of “Call-In” Meetings on Time to Re-Arrest*, CRIME & DELINQ. ONLINEFIRST, Oct. 31, 2019, at 1, 10.

103. *Id.* at 15.

104. *Id.* at 15–16.

105. *Id.* at 16.

neighborhoods, police precincts or divisions, or cities, have often experienced significant declines in violent crime following the implementation of the focused deterrence strategy. The evidence for impact at the individual level is both more limited in volume and mixed in findings. This raises questions in terms of the impact on violent recidivism. Additionally, review of the research raises several additional questions that will be considered in the following sections.

A. *Impact on Violent Recidivism*

Study of the community level impact of focused deterrence does not directly address the question of impact on individual-level violent recidivism. Having said this, it is worth noting that an overall impact on community levels of violence is likely to have an indirect effect on violent recidivism. At a basic level, each reduction in fatal and non-fatal shootings is likely to reduce the number of individuals incarcerated for serious gun violence. That reduces violent recidivism at a macro level. Beyond this effect, the claim of an indirect effect is based on several research-based characteristics of violent crime. First, much violent crime is episodic and related to lifestyles that put people in risky situations.¹⁰⁶ Violence demonstrates patterns of contagion¹⁰⁷ and being involved in shooting networks greatly elevates the risk for all network members being involved in future violence.¹⁰⁸ If overall levels of violence in the community decline, it would seem to reduce the likelihood of violent recidivism through the reduction in risky contexts that can lead to violent incidents among high-risk individuals.

More directly, the limited findings of focused deterrence re-entry efforts at the individual level suggests promise for reducing violent recidivism. This is most apparent in Chicago's parolee forums that used the focused deterrence call-in strategy with high-risk parolees returning to the community.¹⁰⁹ Although the research findings are limited, the positive results support

106. Jesenia M. Pizarro, Kristen M. Zgoba, & Wesley G. Jennings, *Assessing the Interaction Between Offender and Victim Criminal Lifestyles & Homicide Type*, 39 J. CRIM. JUST. 367, 374 (2011).

107. April M. Zeoli, Jesenia M. Pizarro, Sue C. Grady & Christopher Melde, *Homicide as Infectious Disease: Using Public Health Methods to Investigate the Diffusion of Homicide*, 31 JUST. Q. 609, 610 (2014).

108. Papachristos, Wildeman, & Roberto, *supra* note 101, at 147.

109. Wallace, Papachristos, Meares, & Fagan, *supra* note 62. For an example of parolee meetings in Marion County, Indiana, see McGarrell, Banks, & Hipple, *supra* note 46.

continued experimentation and testing, particularly given the related research indicating violence reduction at the community level.¹¹⁰

Finally, the evidence of the gang/group focused deterrence strategy at the individual level is very mixed. Although there is no evidence of “backfire” effects, several studies have found no evidence of reduced re-offending at the individual level.¹¹¹ On the other hand, several studies have found reduced levels of re-offending when the comparison group appears to be of equivalent risk.¹¹² Given the consistent finding of impact at the community level, there appears to be reason to continue to study patterns of violent recidivism at the individual level. In pursuing this research, several questions arise. These include the consistency with best practices in corrections, better understanding of how these strategies are perceived by the individuals affected by the strategies, and whether short-term effects are sustained over time.

B. Consistency with Correctional Best Practices

Contemporary thinking in correctional best practice suggests the idea of using Risk, Need and Responsivity (RNR) principles in developing and delivering treatment services. The risk principle suggests that correctional services should be tailored to the level of risk to re-offend.¹¹³ The need principle refers to individual needs that are associated with criminal behavior.¹¹⁴ These refer to factors such as antisocial personality, pro-criminal attitudes, friends and associates involved in crime, and substance abuse. Responsivity refers to tailoring services to the specific needs of individuals based on risk and need.¹¹⁵ Considerable work has gone into developing assessment tools to measure risk and need and thereby develop individualized treatment plans.¹¹⁶

The focused deterrence strategy is also designed around the concept of risk. Individuals invited to call-in meetings are based on their elevated risk due to gang and group affiliation; involvement in illegal drug markets; histories of violence; and similar factors. Having said this, selection and the offer of

110. Papachristos, Meares, & Fagan, *supra* note 47, at 265; Clark-Moorman, Rydberg, & McGarrell, *supra* note 42, at 1423–24.

111. CHERMAK, *supra* note 76, at 12; Fox & Novak, *supra* note 53, at 302.

112. *E.g.*, Circo, Krupa, McGarrell, & DeBiasi, *supra* note 102, at 15. *But see* Uchida, Swatt, Schnobrich-Davis, Connor, Shutinya, & Wagner, *supra* note 89, at 209 (presenting contrary evidence).

113. D.A. Andrews, James Bonta, & J. Stephen Wormith, *The Recent Past and Near Future of Risk and/or Need Assessment*, 52 CRIME & DELINQ. 7, 7 (2006).

114. *Id.*

115. *Id.*

116. *See, e.g.*, *RNR Simulation Tool*, CTR. FOR ADVANCING CORRECTIONAL EXCELLENCE, https://www.gmuace.org/tools_justice-professionals.html [<https://perma.cc/N6DV-G8W9>].

services is not based on systematic risk and need assessment and responsivity assessment (RNR principles) used to customize individual treatment plans. The practical issues of increasing the use of risk, need, and responsivity to customize services for participants in focused deterrence programs are formidable. Many participants in focused deterrence call-ins do not express an interest in services and do not follow-up to offers of support. Having said this, to the extent that focused deterrence service delivery could be customized based on RNR models, correctional research would suggest we could expect greater reductions in violent recidivism. These findings suggest that police-probation-parole cooperation and coordination, as observed in Detroit's embedded corrections agent program, could be an important ingredient to increasing the efficacy of focused deterrence to address violent recidivism.¹¹⁷

C. *How is Focused Deterrence Perceived by Participants?*

As noted earlier, there are many theoretical foundations of focused deterrence that are presumed to relate to the causal mechanisms of the model. These include changes in perceived deterrence (increasing certainty, severity, and celerity), social support and increased opportunity, procedural justice, community voice, and similar factors. Very little research has examined how the participants in focused deterrence perceive the call-in meetings, how they perceive the messages they receive, what they consider the influential components of the model, and similar issues.¹¹⁸ This lack of understanding of the perceptions of participants also makes it difficult to measure the fidelity and dosage of any particular focused deterrence program. An important avenue of future research on focused deterrence, that may also offer insight to the issue of violent recidivism, is to better understand the perception of focused deterrence from the perspective of participants.

D. *Short- and Long-term Effects*

Despite the strong evidence of community level effects, questions remain about the sustainability of these effects over time. This was first observed in the original Boston Ceasefire initiative as well as the early replication in the

117. See Circo, Krupa, McGarrell, & De Biasi, *supra* note 102, at 15.

118. One example of this type of approach was developed in the initial Indianapolis evaluation of the focused deterrence strategy. Chermak & McGarrell, *supra* note 72, at 175–79. Here, a series of interviews of recently arrested individuals was conducted in the local jail's booking facility. *Id.* at 167. A short survey was administered that asked arrestees of their perception of the likelihood of arrest and prosecution for homicide, robbery, and drug sales. *Id.* at 175–76. The results suggested that there was an increase in the perceived likelihood of arrest and sanctions in the period following the implementation of focused deterrence call-in meetings. *See id.* at 178–79.

Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership.¹¹⁹ After their significant declines, there was some evidence of rebound in serious violence over time (though not reaching the earlier peak levels).¹²⁰ More systematically, a recent study of Kansas City's focused deterrence strategy found a short-term violence reduction but that the results decayed over the course of a two-year study.¹²¹

The question of sustaining long-term effects has often been interpreted as indicative of the challenge of sustaining implementation over time, particularly after the crisis levels of violence no longer exist. For example, the success of Boston Ceasefire resulted in a number of key team members being promoted and no longer involved in the focused deterrence initiative.¹²² Similar patterns were reported in Indianapolis.¹²³ Thus, one potential explanation is that it is difficult to sustain the multi-agency focused deterrence strategy over time.

Another potential explanation is theoretical. What if the impact of the call-in meeting decays over time? Does the shift in perceived deterrence decay over time as participants see members of their social networks involved in gun violence with no arrest and no prosecution? This seems particularly likely given the low rates of clearance by arrest and closure by prosecution in non-fatal shootings.¹²⁴ When one considers the high geographic concentration of firearms violence,¹²⁵ it seems that focused deterrence participants, in contrast to the general public, are much more likely to be aware of shooting victims whose shooters were never arrested or shooters who are walking free. Does this lead to decay of the deterrence message? Similarly, if services are promised but then not provided, does the legitimacy of the message decay in the eyes of participants? Currently, there is very little research on such issues, but it seems

119. CIRCO, MCGARRELL, KRUPA, & DE BIASI, *supra* note 97, at 3.

120. See Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, *supra* note 28, at 207.

121. Fox & Novak, *supra* note 53, at 302.

122. See Braga, Hureau, & Papachristos, *supra* note 60, at 131–32.

123. CHERMAK, *supra* note 76, at 13–14.

124. Clearance rates in non-fatal shootings are not regularly reported by most police departments. Limited research and journalistic investigations suggest rates well below 30% for many cities. *E.g.*, SALMAFATIMA S. ABADIN & MALLORY E. O'BRIEN, MILWAUKEE HOMICIDE REV. COMM'N, 2016 ANNUAL REPORT: HOMICIDES AND NONFATAL SHOOTINGS IN MILWAUKEE 27 (2017); Irshad Altheimer, John Klofas, & Chris Sweadner, *Shooting Case Clearance in Rochester, NY* 5 (Ctr. for Pub. Safety Initiatives Working Paper No. 2018-07, 2018); Annie Sweeney & Jeremy Gorner, *Chicago Police Solve One in Every 20 Shootings. Here Are Some Reasons Why That's So Low*, CHI. TRIB. (Aug. 8, 2018, 5:00 AM) <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-met-chicago-violence-clearance-rate-20180807-story.html> [<https://perma.cc/X7KD-HGW3>].

125. Anthony A. Braga, Andrew V. Papachristos, & David M. Hureau, *The Concentration and Stability of Gun Violence at Micro Places in Boston, 1980–2008*, 26 J. QUANTITATIVE CRIMINOLOGY 33, 34 (2010).

warranted to better understand the promise of the focused deterrence model for sustained community level violence prevention as well as viability as a violent recidivism reduction strategy.

The issue of potential decay may also raise the issue of complementing the focused deterrence strategy with other violence prevention strategies. At the community level, complementing focused deterrence with place-based, evidence-based strategies may help overcome the potential for short-term but non-sustained effects. This may include enforcement (e.g., directed police patrol); intervention (e.g., problem solving at specific hotspot locations; technology), and preventative community development such as disorder reduction, “greening”, and efforts to build collective efficacy.¹²⁶ At the individual level, as noted above, research to better understand the perceptions of program participants, as well as experimentation with the use of RNR principles in providing support to focused deterrence participants, may offer clues as to increasing the likelihood of reducing violent recidivism.

V. SUMMARY

These questions do not suggest that the focused deterrence strategy be discontinued. Clearly, the strong evidence of impact at the community level for reducing serious gun violence is reason to adopt the focused deterrence strategy. Given the exorbitant costs associated with each firearms injury,¹²⁷ as well as the costs to victims, families, and communities, there is ample reason to use this evidence-based strategy. At the same time, to reduce violent recidivism, there are reasons to believe that focused deterrence may indirectly reduce violent re-offending as well as enough promise of direct effects for continued experimentation, refinement, and study.

126. ANTHONY A. BRAGA, PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING AND CRIME PREVENTION 4–5 (2d ed. 2008); Anthony A. Braga, Andrew V. Papachristos, & David Hureau, *The Effects of Hot Spots Policing on Crime: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*, 31 JUST. Q. 633, 637 (2014); Richard Casey Sadler, Jesenia Pizarro, Brandon Turchan, Steven P. Gasteyer, & Edmund F. McGarrell, *Exploring the Spatial-Temporal Relationships Between a Community Greening Program and Neighborhood Rates of Crime*, 83 APPLIED GEOGRAPHY 13, 13 (2017); David Weisburd, Michael Davis, & Charlotte Gill, *Increasing Collective Efficacy and Social Capital at Crime Hot Spots: New Crime Control Tools for Police*, 9 POLICING 265, 272 (2015).

127. PAUL HEATON, RAND, HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: WHAT COST-OF-CRIME RESEARCH CAN TELL US ABOUT INVESTING IN POLICE 2–3 (2010), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2010/RAND_OP279.pdf [<https://perma.cc/7TBJ-K6PL>].