Using Relational Coordination as a Framework and Intervention to Support Collaborative Policing and Improve Crime Outcomes

7th Annual RCRC Roundtable October 2017 Copenhagen, Denmark Creating Change Through Trust Based Relationships

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October 19 & 20, 2017
“The police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police”

—Sir Robert Peele (1829)
Collaborative Policing

• Collaboration is fundamental to effective policing

• This reality has been tested in recent years
  • High profile officer-involved shootings
  • Open conflict
  • Lower levels of trust in police

• Local police are influential within communities
Public Safety: A Coordination Challenge

- Street workers
- Partner agencies
- Corrections
- Police
- Parole
- Employment Services
- Probation
- Behavioral Health
- Sheriff

RELATIONAL COORDINATION
RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE
Research Questions

• RQ 1: To what extent do police departments and their stakeholders communicate, coordinate and collaborate to get work done?

• RQ 2: Does an RC intervention predict differences in performance outcomes?

• RQ 3: How do police departments adopt relational interventions that support collaborative policing and address challenges related to implementation?
Methods

• Quasi-experimental, mixed methods intervention study

• Sample: multi-stage design with intervention and control sites

• Quantitative: RC survey, outcomes

• Qualitative: key informant and semi-structured interviews, site visits, document review
Multi-Stage, Mixed-Methods Sampling Design to Test RC Intervention on SPI Case Study Sites

Universe of SPI Sites (N= 43)

Stage 1: Select sites to represent (mid-sized) departments

Stage 2: Select sites based on primary target/focus area: (e.g. gangs)

Stage 3: Rank sites on SPI Implementation Level (quant and qual data)

Stage 4: Validation of SPI Implementation Level and homogeneity on Key Site Characteristics (key informant interviews)

Sample Frame based on homogenous contextual variables across sites

Randomly assign sample frame of SPI sites to RC Intervention and Control Groups
Treatment vs. Non-treatment

- \( O_1 \) represents baseline measures of RC and outcomes
- \( X \) represents the intervention(s)
- \( O_2 \) and \( O_3 \) are posttest observations on the same measures

- Intervention sites
  - Traditional technical assistance
  - RC interventions
  - RC coaching for change team

- Control sites
  - Traditional technical assistance
Discussion questions

• How do we adapt RC terminology in a way that is understood across organizations?

• What challenges can we anticipate in measuring RC across communities?

• What is the right “dose” of RC when implementing interventions across a community?