

#05 (TAMARA HEROLD)

This transcription was provided by a transcription service that claims a high degree of accuracy combining artificial intelligence and human checking. While their advertising claims accuracy for clear audio transcriptions, Reducing Crime LLC and Jerry Ratcliffe have not checked the transcription and make no warranties or representations of any sort, implied or expressed about the reliability, availability or accuracy of services, products, information or transcriptions contained on our website or in this document for any purpose. We make no claim that this transcription is verbatim. Any reliance that you place on the information contained within this document is strictly at your own risk.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm Jerry Ratcliffe with ReducingCrime.com, a podcast featuring interviews with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers working to advance public safety. Tamara Herold is a researcher who's worked with the Cincinnati Police Department, won the 2017 Herman Goldstein award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. In this episode, we discuss what made the award-winning PIVOT Project so successful. Find out more at ReducingCrime.com and on Twitter @_reducingcrime.

Tamara Herold, formerly Madison, is an associate professor of criminal justice and the graduate director at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. She's also an affiliate scholar for the International Association of Chiefs of Police Center for Police Research and Policy. Her practically driven research focuses on how crime can be fed by the design and management of places from large crowds and venues down to toxic networks of places and neighborhoods. It's the latter that is the subject to this podcast. The PIVOT Project won the prestigious Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing in 2017. And as lead researcher on the study, Tamara has a unique perspective on what made this project to reduce shootings and violent crime so successful. I caught up with her at the 2018 American Society of Criminology Conference in Atlanta.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What was the thing we end up talking about most of the time?

Tamara Herold:

Well, it usually involves alcohol.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The conference ratio of number of presentations you've been to divided by alcoholic drinks.

Tamara Herold:

There you go. Good. I've been really good.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Have you?

Tamara Herold:

Yes, surprisingly.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Here at ASC, you've actually been good. Because if there's one conference to really get drunk at just to get through the presentations, it's ASC, right?

Tamara Herold:

Typically.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Tamara, you've been talking here about PIVOT.

Tamara Herold:

I have?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

PIVOT is a fascinating project.

Tamara Herold:

Well, it's an acronym that stands for Place-Based Investigations of Violent Offender Territories, and it came out of an attempt to answer a very difficult question.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They're the best ones, right?

Tamara Herold:

Absolutely, and this question was why. When we focus in on a violent crime hotspot, why is it that we can suppress that crime for a period of time, but it always comes back?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's incredible, isn't it? The resiliency of crime hotspots to just come back again.

Tamara Herold:

Over and over again, and they're incredibly persistent. The most amazing part is that they tend to reappear in the exact same places.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Sometimes when I'm doing training with police officers, I say, "How many people have been in the same jurisdiction or the same district for 10, 15, 20 years? And are there crime hotspots that are still hotspots today that were hotspots when you started there like 20 plus years ago?" Every hand stays up.

Tamara Herold:

Yes. Every time. When I was a doctoral student, every new city I would go to, whether it was for a conference or a speaking engagement, I'd always try to do a ride along, and I would ask the person I was riding with, "Where would I go

if I wanted to get mugged tonight?" And they would know immediately and they'd say, "You want to go to this address or to this intersection," and I'd say, "Well, how long has it been that way?" And they'd say forever.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The ride along is such a learning opportunity for academics. I can't understand why more of them don't do it just as part of business as usual. Every project, spend time out with the guys because you learn so much that puts everything in context for the work that we do.

Tamara Herold:

I agree, and it's a way to stay connected with everything that's going on in the field.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And so you go to crime hotspots, you go on a ride along, and the cop stands there and go, "Well, it's been like this forever," and then they start going, "Because the family that live over there have been shit bags for how long. Everybody hangs out at the bar and you see these guys staying on the bodega. Those guys on the steps of the bodega have been there for like a decade."

Tamara Herold:

Absolutely. And they'll also talk about all the things that they've done in that hotspot and things that they've done that have been really effective, but yet over time, the sustainability, it seems impossible to combat these issues in a way that produces long-term result. And so that was where we started. First of all, where are those places and can we identify them? How big are they? What's going on in those locations? And then why is it that they're in these spaces? And why after targeted response, do we seem to see that crime level return? Sometimes crime even increasing beyond what it was prior to intervention.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Which agency did you start this work with?

Tamara Herold:

With the Cincinnati Police Department. So at the time, it was Captain Maris Herold, the commander of district four, and she was tapped by the administration to develop a citywide violence reduction strategy. And the city was under a lot of pressure because violent crime had increased dramatically, especially shootings, and they wanted a response and they wanted it to be citywide, and they wanted the reduction to be significant and dramatic. It's no small task.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. That's like a poison chalice, isn't it?

Tamara Herold:

Yes, it is.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We've taken 20 years to get to this stage, but can you come up with the impossible in a hundred days please?

Tamara Herold:

Absolutely. What was amazing about it was she put together this fantastic team. It had a lot of well-seasoned investigators. It had crime analysts, really smart crime analysts. It had people who'd worked with her for decades who had seen these places over time and watched crime persist in these locations for a really long time, and then she had an academic. And we all came together and we started talking about how do we approach this? What do we do? And of course, the first thing you do is you look at the distribution of crime and you find crime is concentrated. It's not random. It's often very predictable.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, it's funny you say that because in a lot of places, the first thing to do is just go out and do an operation. We wouldn't even go into that stage. Get some boots on the ground.

Tamara Herold:

Right. Well, what's interesting about that is it's usually because we know where the problems are. We shouldn't really even need to look at the data. We know where those problem places are. But I think that it's really telling when you start analyzing the dynamics of what's going on in very specific places and trying to figure out just how concentrated crime is in those areas. So of course, we find a disproportionate amount of crime in these very small micro locations. Over 42% of all shooting victims had been shot in these tiny micro locations that made up less than 1.4% of the land mass in Cincinnati.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

40% of those shooting victims had been shot in pretty much 1% of the city.

Tamara Herold:

Correct. And so obviously if you want to drive down violent crime, you want to do the impossible, develop a strategy that's really going to make an impact on violent crime across the city and reduce shootings. It was clear. The implications were clear. We need to focus our resources in those locations.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay. But you went further because for most police departments, that will be the full extent of the analysis they'll do where. Okay, that's it. We've done our analysis.

Tamara Herold:

Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Thanks for that 10 minutes, everybody.

Tamara Herold:

Right. In addition to that analysis, in 2015, the Cincinnati Police Department had an officer who was shot and killed in the line of duty. And that's on everybody's mind, obviously, as we're thinking about that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Of course.

Tamara Herold:

So one of the things that we did and I don't think that we do very often is we looked at what happens to police officers in those same locations. So we knew life was terrible for the people living in these hotspots, but what happens to our officers when we send them into those locations? And of course, we found a disproportionate number of officer injuries were happening in those same locations, as well as subject behaviors that might lead to officer injuries such as resisting arrest.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There are really just harmful places for everyone.

Tamara Herold:

For everybody. And so if you think about this from an ethics perspective, yes, you must do something for your community, for your citizens, but you must also do something for the people that you're asking to go in every single day and address these issues.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think that's one of the first instances of somebody really thinking about that from that perspective, which is something that I think isn't really addressed so much when we think about hotspots policing, is we have to recognize and perhaps consider it as one of the risks, the liabilities that we struggle with is that we are deliberately sending police officers into places where they are proportionately more likely to be harmed.

Tamara Herold:

True. And I think the true ethical dilemma really comes out when you think about the fact that we have known for decades where those places are and just how bad they really are. And yet we don't consider the fact that that's exactly what we're asking our officers to do every day is to go into those places over and over and over again and accept that as a reality, rather than trying to figure out, all right, how do we really change the dynamics in these locations?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So you moved to stage two, which was?

Tamara Herold:

Which was let's take a step back and let's think about this from a different angle because obviously lots of smart people have been looking at hotspots, violent locations in cities for many, many years have developed a wide range of strategies. What are we missing? And I had a few years earlier published a book chapter with John Eck where we started systematically identifying places and different types of places that offenders use. So not just the crime site, but thinking through the crime script, how offenders move, and what they do in different places at different times. So we had identified four different types of crime places called the CS's. So we've got the crime site. We have convergent settings.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay. So let's translate that one into English.

Tamara Herold:

Sure. So a convergent setting is simply a public space where offenders might congregate. So it might be a street corner people are hanging out on.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. Steps of a bodega or outside a bar.

Tamara Herold:

Outside a bar, inside a bar, public locations.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay. Yeah.

Tamara Herold:

Now, a comfort space, the third type of setting, is different from your convergent setting because it's private. It's controlled by offenders. Right. So it's a location that it's not open to the public. It might be an apartment. It might be the back of a store.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Somebody's grandmother's house.

Tamara Herold:

Somebody's grandmother's house. And so those locations are typically used to store or stash supplies, weapons, maybe plan crimes. And the fourth type of location is the corrupting spot. The best way to describe it really is to say that it's a business that generates crime elsewhere. So the crime that it's generating is not at that location, but rather in other parts of the city or in nearby locations. As an example in Las Vegas, after the economic crash, copper theft was rampant. And we couldn't keep copper in our light posts or in homes. Some of the vacant homes due to the foreclosure crisis, they were being stripped of all the copper, and the true cause of that was recycling centers that would accept that copper without asking any questions.

Tamara Herold:

So that might be an example of a corrupting spot or a location that might be willing to launder money. And so together, there's these four different types of locations. Well, I described these locations to Maris and her team. And Maris having worked in district four could describe for me a network of places that included all of those types of locations and exactly how offenders moved between them and how it created this place network, which ultimately served as the infrastructure for criminal activity.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. And what's interesting about this is that it gives you a real insight and understanding into the criminal environments, not just one place. It's not one harmful place, but it's this connected range of places that people are tapping into. They're going home somewhere to rest at night. They're storing weapons and guns somewhere else. These are a bunch of connected places. But what strikes me about it is the challenge of getting people who have real

insight and understanding into all those connections. Because when we're relying on just patrol guys, they're seeing life at 40 miles an hour.

Tamara Herold:

Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They're not getting that insight and understanding into these really harmful places. There's only a minority of police officers who can bring this knowledge, right?

Tamara Herold:

Yes. But I will offer this caveat that I think officers know much more. The problem is we don't have a mechanism to extract that information from them.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That's always been the problem, hasn't it?

Tamara Herold:

Absolutely. And so what was fascinating was when we put together this description of places and how places might be networked, we brought in some really experienced investigators and said, "What do you think about this?" And it was fascinating because they begin to describe a theft ring that was operating outside of a very well-known grocery store and describing those places using the terms that I just offered and said, "This is exactly how this ring is operating, and I've seen it for years."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, the investigators had the advantage of doing interviews. They've made arrests. They've been maybe done searches to the home addresses. They're starting to understand the other places that are being used.

Tamara Herold:

Absolutely. And they put it all together. And the question then became, well, why haven't you done anything about it? And their answer was very simple, "Well, no one's asked me to."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We spent too much time isolating the detectives just to have them off to the side, investigate cases, get a clearance, get a conviction, but not brought them into the fold in terms of all that knowledge helping to drive crime prevention.

Tamara Herold:

Absolutely. And so the idea that we walked away with was we need to use investigators in a different way. And what we need to do is go into these locations and identify those place networks. Because usually the only thing we're ever focused on, the only thing we ever really see are the crime sites. This is going to take people who are talented, people who understand investigations, people who know how to work CIs, officers who know how to manage confidential informants, to go in and identify those networks of places and how offenders were operating within them, and then turn our attention to who controls those places and why are they facilitating this type of behavior.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay. Now, this is all during essentially the middle of a crisis. So how were you buying time to do what sounds like an in depth analysis while the city is having level one urgent code red panic?

Tamara Herold:

Well, it sounded great. The description of what was going to happen sounded great, and that was really enough to buy some time. So Cincinnati had a press release and they said, "We have adopted this new strategy. It's called PIVOT." And I think that people were really excited about it because it made sense. It sounds like common sense because it is, but we've just never framed it this way. And so there was a lot of support for it very early on. But I think you've hit the nail on the head. I think one of the impediments to this type of strategy is that you have to be willing to do the hard work, to do the investigations, and these things do take time. So if you need an immediate response, it's not PIVOT.

Tamara Herold:

PIVOT will generate in the end that long-term reduction that you're looking for. It might completely change the dynamics of one of those locations that have been persistently violent, but it will not happen overnight.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So you attack the violence problem by going after the offenders predominantly or the offenders and their places. What was the strategy?

Tamara Herold:

At the time, the City of Cincinnati had their CIRV initiative, which was their focused-deterrence initiative. They were already investigating networks of offenders and then systematically dismantling gangs through focused arrests, through deterrence messages. So the idea was to couple CIRV with PIVOT. So we would be investigating the networks of offenders. At the same time, we're investigating the networks of places. What was going to be different about how we would approach the response to places is that it would not be a police driven response. What we put together was what we called a PIVOT review board, which consisted of all the heads or major players in all of the city departments.

Tamara Herold:

They would come together every few weeks, and the investigative team would basically share their analytical products and then share their investigative results with this all city team and say, "Okay, we think this place is being used as a comfort space. What could we as a city do to change what's going on at this location?"

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And did everybody play nice?

Tamara Herold:

Everybody played nice because it was driven and this was-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay, this whole story is now mythical from this point on.

Tamara Herold:

It is a bit mythical, but I'll tell you, here's the key to it if you really want to do this. The city manager was behind it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay.

Tamara Herold:

And told everyone-

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So you had a champion.

Tamara Herold:

And it couldn't be a champion in the department, the police department necessarily. It needed to be the mayor and the city manager, and they were both champions for this initiative.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And what sort of timeframe are we looking at from the start of getting the fellowship of the ring together?

Tamara Herold:

So PIVOT did not roll out as intended.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Does anything?

Tamara Herold:

Never. PIVOT is no exception to that. Initially, we had about 22 sites. We were going to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the impact of PIVOT by randomly selecting half the sites for intervention and wait to roll out PIVOT in the other sites once we were able to address violence in the initial locations, but we didn't have enough resources to address all the sites at once. By the time PIVOT actually hit the streets, the commander in charge of the initiative had been transferred to another position. The new person who took it over, he actually for his thesis wrote about comfort spaces. He obviously understood place networks and how places were used by offenders. So he took over the team.

Tamara Herold:

It was envisioned as a very large unit within the department, but I think the lieutenant ended up having a sergeant and just a few investigators and they rolled PIVOT out in two pilot locations.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. So the RCT idea kind of went out the window a little bit.

Tamara Herold:

It went out the window.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Now, you said that the lieutenant was doing his thesis.

Tamara Herold:

Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What was he studying for?

Tamara Herold:

He studied criminal justice at the University of Cincinnati. So he studied under my mentor, John Eck. Well, obviously as a police officer in Cincinnati, he was interested in places and he had worked with Maris for some time.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And is it for his master's degree?

Tamara Herold:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Was it helpful having an officer who obviously had an education and background in the area?

Tamara Herold:

Yes. And I think Matt, whether he wanted the assignment or not, was the obvious choice and he was going to lead this initiative. And he rolled it out the best that he could with the limited team that he had, and he had phenomenal results.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So from the moment the city decided there was a disaster unfolding and fired at the first flare, how far down the line time wise are we?

Tamara Herold:

That's a good question. So I can only speak to when I first became involved with the project. I think I really started working on this in very late 2015. By April 2016, the idea was fully formed. Cincinnati had conducted their press conference and the PIVOT team had been assembled. And we started training the new investigators on research and theory related to crime at place and helping them to understand how place networks operate, and they began their investigations.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They begin their investigations. They've now got this kind of theoretical construct, this idea behind them, and a sense of focus for the investigations, which I'm sure really help focus their detective work and their investigations. What was the goal of what they were going to do with it? What was the implementation that they were going to apply?

Tamara Herold:

So for the investigators, and this is what I love about PIVOT, we're really asking police to do what police do best and what police want to do, which is go out and conduct investigations. These investigations, Maris would tell you, look a little bit more like federal level investigations because they're a bit more long-term. They're not focused on a single

offender or a single case. And so their focus was to go out and basically watch what happens in these locations, look at the dynamics, how offenders move. So when a black and white rolls up in a high crime location, where do offenders disappear? What doorways do they choose to disappear into?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right.

Tamara Herold:

And to start looking into why are they choosing those locations, who owns them, who lives there, who operates these places, and start really, again, uncovering that infrastructure that's facilitating the violence in that location.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It seems really focused. I think this is an important part of this that I've liked about it since I've seen you present about it the first time was the specific focus. This isn't a kind of broad dragnet that's sweeping up everybody in the community, but it's really focusing on those people that deserve and have earned our love and respect, right?

Tamara Herold:

Absolutely, yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So they're doing the investigations and you're asking them to do their investigations, but investigations always end up being focused on people. But you're talking about bringing in these other agencies to do something about the places. Is that right?

Tamara Herold:

Correct. What you're describing is a shift in thinking on the part of police and with the city department. So for police, again, we're focused on people, but how people are using the places. And then shifting that focus to the people who control those spaces, whether it's the landlord or the manager of the local convenience store that's facilitating a drug market. So it becomes an interesting challenge, even working with your confidential informants, with your CIs. You send a CI in, they're usually really interested in recording perhaps a drug deal occurring. But in this instance, they really have to focus in on obtaining evidence to suggest that the person who owns or is managing the location is aware that this drug deal is going down in that location.

Tamara Herold:

So everybody's focus is shifted just slightly. And then you're taking those investigative products, you're presenting them before this board, which really represents all the resources of the city, including legal. I know the commander would tell you that the city solicitor is a really talented guy. His name is Mark Manning. And without him, none of this would be possible. So if we couldn't get a place manager to play nice and do what needed to be done to change a particular location and make it less conducive to criminal activity, he was the one who stepped in and said, "No, you will do this and here are the legal consequences for not doing so."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's interesting that you need a number of different champions who've already bought into this idea to make this happen.

Tamara Herold:

Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There's a lot of moving parts here that require a lot of cogs to all be turning with enough teeth to actually make some change happen.

Tamara Herold:

Yes, absolutely. And I think the coordination can be a challenge, but here's what I see as one of the exciting parts about a strategy like PIVOT is it's not necessarily asking for new resources, it's taking the resources that a city already has in place. And again, shifting focus a bit, asking people to come to the table who haven't been at the table before. So when traffic and engineering show up in the room and they say, "What do we have to do with this?" Convincing them that, no, it is your role. It's part of our role as people who are leaders in the city and who manage the resources of the city to help shift the dynamics in these locations, getting their buy in, getting them on board.

Tamara Herold:

But the lieutenant in Cincinnati, he had great insight into how to motivate individuals who maybe hadn't focused on crime at places before. So he took all of these individuals, put them in vests, and had them walk around these locations with him. And he would physically point out the places that his investigators had identified as contributing to this crime infrastructure. And he said it was a very important moment where they were physically looking at these locations that they knew that they could impact through their resources and say, "Wow, we see the problem. We see what we can do about it." And I think that that helped tremendously with gaining buy in from these individuals.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

My experience with committees tends to be that the effectiveness of the committee is inversely proportional to the size of it. As it gets bigger, it just becomes more useless and less decisive.

Tamara Herold:

That's been my experience as well. Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Were you bringing everybody in and saying, "What can you contribute to this," or had you sort of decided as a group what needed to be done and then just brought those key stakeholders in? Which way around were you playing this?

Tamara Herold:

It went the more dangerous route, which was to have everybody at the table. We borrowed this idea from the idea of homicide review boards.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yup.

Tamara Herold:

So you had all these people around the table saying, "What could have been different?" This was the same idea. And at the time... Sometimes when I think the investigators are sharing their intelligence with the group, they're not really sure who has additional intelligence who's been to that location before. Maybe buildings and inspection says, "It's so interesting that you say that because we were in there last week and here's what we saw."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You wouldn't know that as an investigator. So you're almost kind of trying to tap into some of the Donald Rumsfeldian Unknown Unknowns.

Tamara Herold:

Correct.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You don't know what you don't know.

Tamara Herold:

And the best way to figure that out is to have everybody at the table. The interesting thing about this, and I think the reason that people stay engaged, is because... I think the same reason it's easy for us to do what we do as professors, it's really difficult to make crime boring. They'll go over the incidents that happened that week in that location.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, everybody wants to turn up to that. You can't not slow down for a traffic accident, right?

Tamara Herold:

Exactly.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Am I going to see a limb hanging out? Come on. I want to see something here.

Tamara Herold:

Right. And so I think that showing them the human consequences at the same time that they're showing them the intelligence that they're gathering, at the same time asking them for their input and their investment in this area keeps people engaged in a way that maybe wouldn't be as exciting if we were talking about anything else.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So you're now a couple of years into this. How are things looking?

Tamara Herold:

Things look really impressive. I think the results were even better than expected. And in some ways, we're still really surprised by them. I think we're going to move forward. I would like to partner with the city to do a really rigorous evaluation of what's happened in those locations because I have lots of questions as an academic. We know that other things are going on in these locations at the same time that we're rolling out these types of initiatives. And so obviously

I'm very curious about that. Lucky for me, the City of Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department has just rolled out a PIVOT site in my city, and that's where I'm a professor. And so I'm working closely with that department to conduct an evaluation of those efforts.

Tamara Herold:

But I can tell you that in Cincinnati, they have... And I want to say this carefully because obviously these places have not been transformed into the best places to live in the city, but the level of violence in these locations is shockingly low even a year, year and a half after the PIVOT initiative.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What do you think is the reason for that? Is it focusing on the people? Are some of the hardcore players being incarcerated? Is it just the generalized attention? Is it a focused-deterrence component? Is it shutting down the places? Do you have a sense yet of where the gains have been struck?

Tamara Herold:

I would never discount the impact of taking out some of the significant players.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's amazing how many people would rush to discount that within the criminal justice as well. Here at the criminology field, that's almost heretical to suggest that taking out serious players can actually benefit a community.

Tamara Herold:

We know that it can benefit a community. I think the issue relates to the problem that we began with when we started talking about this is that we can have an impact, but sustaining that impact is extraordinarily difficult. So I would never say that taking those main players out had no effect here. Certainly I'm making the assumption that it did. However, I can't explain the long-term success going over a year and a half without one shooting in a location where somebody was being shot every 12 to 13 days. PIVOT was focused not only on the main players, not only on the crime sites, but on that larger infrastructure that was facilitating all of that bad behavior in that area for a very, very long time.

Tamara Herold:

And that infrastructure, and having not built a criminal infrastructure on my own, I'm saying this...

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You really haven't lived...

Tamara Herold:

I haven't lived. You're right. I've fallen short in that respect, but I think that it takes years to build something like that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And you've given these things interesting names. So you've got convergence locations and you've got comfort locations. And just the terminology of how you're thinking about them suggests that they're about making crime convenient and easy. Disruption isn't about arresting everybody necessarily, but it's making crime less convenient, less

comfortable, less easy to easily access the escape places and the firearms and the money and the drugs and the places where we can hang out that's just half a block away. It's to make crime inconvenience

Tamara Herold:

Very inconvenient. And it takes a while for it to become as convenient as it was in these locations. And I think by hitting that entire infrastructure, I don't know that you'll be able to sustain those results forever because human beings choose specific locations for specific reasons to engage in very particular types of activity. There's something about those locations that's very attractive to offenders. And it might be that they want to rebuild that infrastructure in that location for a very specific reason. However, it's going to take them a long time.

Tamara Herold:

And again, it's worth that investment of spending a little bit more time to uncover that entire infrastructure, really focus on the whole thing, not just the crime site, dismantle it systematically so that we get a much longer return on investment. And what's great is if you're looking at revitalizing a part of your city, one of the worst conditions that can exist is that it's unsafe. And if you're able to stabilize a location by removing that infrastructure, it gives the city a chance to search for investments in other people who might be interested in taking over those spaces.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And the community can have some time to build their own resilience.

Tamara Herold:

Agreed. And so in Cincinnati, they have a very well-coordinated community engagement effort. It's headed by Ethel Cogen, their neighborhood enhancement program. One of the best things I think they did is when they sent PIVOT in and they stripped out that infrastructure. Ethel came in after the fact and was really pushing some of those community resources into, again, build the resiliency with the community and to help sustain some of that long-term impact.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

If I want to start PIVOT somewhere, what do I need? What are the pieces I need to be able to put it together?

Tamara Herold:

You definitely need your city leaders on board first, and you need a willing police department. I think those are the critical elements to begin. You're going to need the backing of your city manager, your mayor because, again, the intervention is driven by the city and all of those city resources. The investigation is led by the police department, but in the end, the thing that changes the dynamics is much larger than any police initiative.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, it does sound like what you end up with is an individual investigation, but then identifies multiple places that are all different. So you end up with almost five or six or a group of different individual problem-oriented policing projects to do something about the bodega, to shut down the drug house on the corner, to do something about the abandoned lot where the guys are hiding the guns and the money and the drugs and that kind of stuff. They all become independent projects for these groups to tackle. So to deal with one collective problem is actually not a small endeavor, is it?

Tamara Herold:

No, not at all. And your description really points to another key player in this entire process, and that's going to be your legal partner. So having a really talented city solicitor who understands places and understands law surrounding places and what levers can be pulled to get people on board, these landlords or these owners that are facilitating either knowingly or unknowingly this criminal activity. You have to have somebody whose talented and who's willing to really take these individuals to task and hold them accountable.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What it sounds like in Cincinnati is you had a real alignment of the stars to get all the right people, good police department and a supportive mayor and a supportive legal person and other agencies. It sounds like a lot of things have to work together. Are you worried about the capacity for this to have as we would call some external validity to be able to take it to other places?

Tamara Herold:

Yes. And what I would like to do, what I hope to spend lots of time doing is to develop a blueprint for doing that. And one of the ways in which we're trying to accomplish this is I've partnered with the University of Cincinnati and also with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and we went after a technical assistance grant that we were just awarded to help different sites implement place-based responses to crime problems. And so one of the things obviously that we'll be sharing with them are some of these best practices associated with the PIVOT strategy.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's going to be great to see how it works in other places and how we learn how to implement these kind of complex solutions, because there are no simple solutions to crime problems these days. We've done all the simple stuff. We're beyond that. So now we have to understand some of these more rigorous, insightful, and thoughtful responses, which are going to be necessary to deal with the systemic problems that we've got in so many communities.

Tamara Herold:

If it was easy, we would have solved the issue in long ago.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Exactly. This all sounds fascinating. Where can people go to learn a little bit more about it?

Tamara Herold:

This project received the 2017 Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. So on the Problem-Oriented Policing website, which is popcenter.org, you can download the Goldstein submission associated with the original Cincinnati project, and there's a description of the project and also a website listed there that offer some additional resources associated with this.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And I'll provide a link to that from ReducingCrime.com so people can find it.

Tamara Herold:

Fantastic.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

This sounds fascinating. I'm intrigued to see where it's going. It sounds a great way to combine social networks. What police like to do is just focus on serious repeat offenders, but what we've also learned from that small block of criminology that's actually practically useful, which is minuscule small, but still incredibly useful for policing, that whole sense of environmental criminology. Your background is an environmental criminology. It's all combining together with a nice practical solution. While difficult to implement, it sounds really valuable in terms of tackling a multitude of the issues that in reality we see on the ground every time we go out driving around with the cops.

Tamara Herold:

Yes, I think it's really promising, and it's not rocket science. It requires thinking about these things a little bit differently and a little bit of effort and the willingness to pull people together to get it done.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm excited to see where it's going to go. Tamara, thanks very much.

Tamara Herold:

Thank you and thanks for the opportunity to talk about this .

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That interview with Tamara Herold was episode five of Reducing Crime, recorded in November 2018. More information on the PIVOT Project can be found at reducingcrime.com/podcast. New podcasts are announced on Twitter @_reducingcrime. Don't forget the underscore. Be safe and best of luck.