

#97 (MIKE SCOTT)

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Jerry Ratcliffe:

Reducing crime features conversations with influential thinkers in the police service and leading crime and policing researchers.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Professor Mike Scott is a former police chief and director of the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, and he's a foundational name in the history of problem-oriented policing around the world. We chat about that history and the challenges of getting problem-oriented work established in police departments.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm Jerry Ratcliffe, and this is Reducing Crime. My guest this month is Mike Scott. He's the director of the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and a clinical professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University. He's dedicated most of his professional career to advancing problem-oriented policing and, as such, has changed the lives of many people for the better. Mike was formerly a clinical professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School, Chief of Police in Lauderhill, Florida, Special Assistant to the Chief of the St. Louis, Missouri Metropolitan Police Department and Director of Administration of the Fort Pierce, Florida Police Department.

And as you'll hear way back in the years of history, he was a legal assistant to the police commissioner of the New York City Police Department after first starting his career as an officer in Madison, Wisconsin. Mike holds a law degree from Harvard Law School and a bachelor's from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He chairs the judging committee for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. And in 1996, he received the prestigious Police Executive Research Forum's Gary P. Hayes Award for innovation and leadership in policing. Now, back in January, I was in Mesa, Arizona, where the local police department had kindly invited me to provide my three-day police commanders crime reduction course. Given it covers problem wanted policing, it made sense to chat with Mike while I was in town. We found an outside fire pit at my hotel in Mesa so we could brave the chilly 70 degree weather in an Arizonan winter.

Yeah, there's a little bit of wind noise here and there, but it's not a problem. As you join us, well, we're indeed talking about the weather. How very British of us.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The weather here is

Mike Scott:

Unlivable for a third of the year. Absolutely spectacular a third of the year and in between. It's just different seasons than you would find in Philadelphia or up north.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right, because you never grew up here, did you?

Mike Scott:

No. What I was used to, I grew up in Wisconsin where winter was unbearable, just unlivable for three to four months. Here, summer is unlivable.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Have you ever lived anywhere where it's just nice all year round?

Mike Scott:

No. So in the United States, the only places are like San Diego. There's a town down in South Phoenix or South Arizona called Pisby.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah, I thought about to say Phoenix and Phoenix is brutal.

Mike Scott:

Pisby advertises that it is 72 degrees every day year round. San Diego is kind of like that.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You could be retiring in these lovely places instead of living in these sweltering hell-holes. What keeps you still going? What keeps you still invigorated?

Mike Scott:

Well, I actually a couple weeks ago announced my retirement date.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oh, really?

Mike Scott:

I told my university that I'll be retiring the end of next academic year, so May of 27. And more than likely I will end up going back once more into the breach, back into the cold weather.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Back to the frozen north again.

Mike Scott:

Back to Chicago.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You'd Be like a reverse snowbird. What's the matter with you? Well, then congratulations for when that comes around. How long have you been involved in policing then by the time you retire?

Mike Scott:

Since 1980. So that will be about 47 years when I retire.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What drew you to it?

Mike Scott:

Initially, pretty typical adolescent male fantasy beginning at about 15 years old.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm not entirely sure that's a typical... Most people kind of drift into policing, wander into it.

Mike Scott:

I was fascinated by the police cars that my local police department were driving back in the 1970s and I thought they were so cool. Policing made my shortlist. So then when I graduated high school, my father who was a professor at the University of Wisconsin, he said, "Well, they've just developed a new major at UW called Behavioral Science and Law." And he said, "You keep talking about policing. I thought that might interest."

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So he was desperate to try and give you something not in policing then try to get you into academia.

Mike Scott:

He was just open. He was an academic.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What was this area?

Mike Scott:

Linguistics. He just said, "This might interest you." To get that major, I had to write a thesis. I decided I'd do my thesis on the occupational perspectives of police patrol officers. How do they see the world? How do they understand it? In that time, there was a fair amount of research. People like Jerome Skolnik and James Q. Wilson, Michael Banton, Albert Reiss, sort of big names in Policing Back then. They were very interested in this area because this was a time when there was a lot of discussion about needs for major reform of the American police institution.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Has there ever been a time when there hasn't been some sort of reform or discussion about change in policing?

Mike Scott:

There was major reform movement in the 1930s and you certainly go back before then, 1870s and 1880s, but in 1930s, major national concerns, presidential commissions on police reform. But then from about the 1930s through the 1960s, late '60s, the American public was basically happy with the police.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. Not sure we'll see those days again.

Mike Scott:

No, no. The civil rights movement sort of along with the anti-war movement in the United States put stress on the police. The civil rights movement had the police essentially in many places prohibiting cracking down on political protests, especially with Black civil rights protesters.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So you were growing up in this period sort of a little bit after this period in the '70s. None of it impacted you. You still drawn to policing?

Mike Scott:

Well, as a kid, I remember we had the anti-war protests and riots on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus and my parents prohibited us from going downtown. It was just too dangerous. So we were aware of that. My father was a chair of the English department. He was sort of in the middle of some of that stuff. And my local police department, they didn't equit themselves very well. They were basically coming in onto campus and cracking heads and really treating protestors very roughly. And that led to, at least in Madison, eventually a major shift in policing philosophy. One of the protestors got his head literally cracked open by the police, got elected mayor of the city. So he was quite interested in it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What does it take to become a mayor of the city? Well, a head injury's a good start. I think there's probably quite a few people thinking there. Mayor has had a head injury. Yeah.

Mike Scott:

Not entirely intentionally, but they ended up hiring this guy ironically out of the Minneapolis Police Department to be their new police chief. He was a pretty tough guy. He was a former Marine. He was a black belt and karate or judo or something like that. He was a big guy. He got himself a master's degree in sociology at the University of Minnesota. Had some very enlightened views, came to Madison as the police chief.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You're going to keep this a secret. You're not going to tell us his name then.

Mike Scott:

David Cooper.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There you go.

Mike Scott:

And Wisconsin law made it very difficult to fire a police chief. They essentially had life tenure.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I mean, that's unheard of nowadays. Well,

Mike Scott:

That was important to Madison in that the police union bitterly resented the reforms that Cooper was proposing, tried everything to get him fired, but they couldn't do it. So when Cooper came to Madison, he ended up getting to know a scholar at the Wisconsin Law School, Herman Goldstein. And so Cooper and Goldstein developed a very close working relationship and a friendship. So Goldstein was influential in helping Cooper think through the reforms that were necessary. And Goldstein had been thinking about this for decades.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah. So you knew Herman really quite well.

Mike Scott:

My thesis advisor was a sociologist and he said to me, "I don't know much about police so I got to read your thesis and grade it, but if you really want to know what to read, what to write about, you need to go over the law school and

introduce yourself to this Professor Goldstein." So I did that. I went over and introduced myself and Professor Goldstein at that time, he was just enormously generous, told me everything I needed to read.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah, I met him once. Very nice guy. Just very gentle, very easygoing.

Mike Scott:

Yes. And then he also gave me special permission to enroll in the course he taught at the law school, Policing of Free Society, built around his 1977 book called The Role of the Police in a Free Society. That course really, I still want to drive those fast police cars. And that was still there. For

Jerry Ratcliffe:

A while, right? Come on.

Mike Scott:

But learning from Herman told me that there's a whole intellectual dimension to this whole business of policing. So as soon as I graduate, I apply to become a police officer in Madison. While I'm waiting for that process, Goldstein gets funded to launch the first pilot study of problem-oriented policing funded by National Institute of Justice, hires me as a research assistant. Then I get hired by the department, join the police department, and I'm sort of off and running in my career.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You started in patrol.

Mike Scott:

Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Like everybody does. Did your understanding of policing, which was at a far deeper level than I'm sure any other recruits would've been at the time, did that make it difficult to engage with the running and gunning side of policing?

Mike Scott:

Yes and no. As you know, you get onto the street and damn it, you better just be good at every aspect of policing. The running and the gunning, the enforcement, the fighting and the negotiating and all of it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Don't be a slacker, do the job, make sure we don't get called back to the same place.

Mike Scott:

Exactly.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah.

Mike Scott:

So all of that stuff, and you're immersed in the police subculture.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Back up your colleagues, go for a drink. Yeah.

Mike Scott:

But you're also always constantly thinking, "What am I doing? Is this the right thing? Is there a better way to do this?" Your brain is just, it's been programmed to always be thinking, "Is there a better way to be policing?" It's not something the department cares to hear about.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

No, and I don't think it's a lot of things that most recruits think about. They're just kind of learning the job. But you had this extra insight that almost this unique education prior to coming into policing.

Mike Scott:

Yeah. So fairly quickly in my career, I'm thinking now what I want to do is I want to become a police chief. That's my dream job. I want to get into the business of actually doing the police reform. So again, then Goldstein and he says, "Look, we don't have a lot of great police administration masters and doctoral programs in the country. You're just as well off getting a law degree." While I'm a patrol officer, I take the law school admissions test and say, "I'm going to leave my police department, go to Harvard for law school." Dumb luck. Not the Harvard Law School, but the Harvard Kennedy School of Government at that time, the very year I go there, develops an interest in police reform.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I mean, are your feet sore through landing on them at this point? Yeah, you're just drifting along, hanging with Herman Goldstein, going to the Harvard Kennedy School, blah,

Mike Scott:

Blah, blah. I feel like Forrest Gump in that movie. I'm always there at these moments. So in sitting in these meetings for a couple years talking about the future of both American and British policing, I get to know some of these people. I ended up in the New York City Police Department and working as a legal assistant to the police commissioner overseeing this new approach to a community problem-solving approach. Eight to 900 police officers throughout all of the 77 precincts all working in a different way, applying these principles that Goldstein had been talking about.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I never got the sense that it really took off in New York.

Mike Scott:

It took off while Ward was commissioner. And then the other police chief who had wanted to hire me, he ends up succeeding Ward as the police commissioner. A guy named Lee Brown.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yep.

Mike Scott:

Tries to expand it probably too much.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, to be fair to Brown, that's rare, right? Because a lot of the time it's so often as Ken Pease so often says, new chiefs will come in and kill the Cubs. Any initiative that was started by somebody else, they'll end that and then they'll bring their own initiative just to leave their mark on the department. To his credit, he expanded a program. Yeah. He

Mike Scott:

Said, "I'm going to leave my mark by going away from the special unit approach that we had developed to every copy going to be a community problem solver." And that I think was a bridge too far and probably impractical.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And it probably still is to this day.

Mike Scott:

Yeah, I think so. But we didn't know that. We're experimenting.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And I think that's key. This is a time when people are trying new things. You've got to try new stuff and see what wins and what doesn't, what succeeds and what fails because otherwise everything stagnates.

Mike Scott:

Goldstein's original vision, what he wrote about, what I knew we were trying to do in Madison and in London at the time, it was really kind of high level policy driven where senior command staff was running these problem oriented policing projects. High level people making decisions, now engaging line level officers, but the line level officers weren't running the show, oftentimes with external academic research support. So that's what Goldstein envisioned, that most of this work would be overseen at the highest levels. You might only be working on one or two projects at any time. That's it.

Within a police department. Within a Police Agency. A few key areas.

Mike Scott:

Baltimore County, Maryland, Newport News, Virginia actually began to experiment with this idea that no, you could actually push the management of problem solving down to the line level where you now have police constables, police officers, and their immediate supervisors initiating and running the projects. Well, maybe this problem-solving stuff is really best thought of as line-level work.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Based on those experiences, is there a sweet spot for where promoted policing should work? Because at one point you've got the sort of detachment of the chief in headquarters with very little in most departments frontline engagement. The other side, you've got the frontline who are dealing with the crap day-to-day that they're trying to solve, but they don't have a lot of juice. It's this eternal paradox, right? They don't have a lot of organizational power to wield to actually implement change.

Mike Scott:

Yeah. Where I've settled in my own mind comparing this new mode of policing that we were introducing that we roughly call problems often. We're asking police to adopt a whole new approach, a way of thinking about their work. I said, "Well, how might that square with other modes of policing like routine patrol, responding to incidents, handling emergencies?" And for each of those modes, we've had to think organizationally, how do you structure those? How do you manage them? How do you make sure that these things get done? And when I thought about that, I recognized that in all of those other modes, we do both. We generalize the function and we specialize it. So if you take criminal investigation, for example, is that done by patrol officers routinely or is it done by detectives at a higher level? The answer is both.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right.

Mike Scott:

It's not either or, it's both. And that I ultimately concluded is the model we should be pursuing for problem solving.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Okay. But the challenge then becomes it's not just organizationally, frontline response also has its own culture and character and detective work has its own culture and character. What is the culture and character of problem solving within a department?

Mike Scott:

Well, that's what you have to create. And you only create it as you do with investigations, as you do with emergency response, as you do with routine incident handling. You tell police officers, you got to do this. This is part of the job. I don't care if you like it or not, this has to be done. It's essential. Have

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You met the newest cops? They're not going to like this message. I

Mike Scott:

Never worry about the new cops. They're so eager to please. They'll come out and do anything you ask them to do for

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The most

Mike Scott:

Part. I also find that the older the cops get, the easier this concept of problem solving is for them to grasp. Well,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I think certainly some of them get a little bit bitter and twisted and that's understandable with the job. But for the ones

Mike Scott:

Who still are motivated,

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Still

Mike Scott:

Interested in doing policing. Right.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

They've seen the response stuff year in, year out and they know it's not really been that effective and they're looking to leave a more permanent mark and they're not that fussed about running and gunning so much.

Mike Scott:

So that's the key is that police administrators, and I think where they have largely failed, at least in the United States, is they have failed to create that culture and expectation that problem solving, it will be done. There was a time when criminal investigation was not thought of as a police function very early in the development of police forces. Much of that was privatized or just left to victims to pursue their own. But over time, police began to take on, adopt that function

and then develop a whole culture and set of norms through policy, procedure, training, enforcement of standards and so forth. The culture will then form around it. The same is true with problem solving. Do

Jerry Ratcliffe:

You think also some of that is that they haven't created reward mechanisms? Yeah,

Mike Scott:

That's part of it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We know what a good detective looks like. I think we have a fairly good sense of who the respected, especially the peer respected, or at least the front level cops, you know who there's just that natural police, as they say in Baltimore, who they can turn up, they can deal with stuff. They're great at clearing cases. We recognize those skill sets, but the skillset of somebody who is prepared to go and sit in council meetings and argue for better streetlights or for a change in a road pattern or to put gates on a gated community and just write letters and sit in council meetings and go to community meetings. We never really have found a way to reward or respect that kind of work. But

Mike Scott:

It's not hard. When I was a police chief, I said, "Well, I'm going to have an award program that recognizes good police work and emergency response. It recognizes good criminal investigation and it recognizes good problem solving. You can do the same thing with the promotion system. There's no reason administrators can't say, if you want to get promoted, you better have done some good problem solving yourself. You better have demonstrated an ability to supervise it and to lead it or you're not getting ahead." Yeah.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

There's only a few websites that I ever recommend to police. One is the What Work Center out of the UK and another one is the Center for Problem Oriented Policing, which you've been involved in from the start. Tell me, how did the Center for Problem Oriented Policing get started?

Mike Scott:

I got a visiting fellowship with the US Department of Justice COPS Office in the late '90s. And

Jerry Ratcliffe:

We should say that COPS for the foreign listeners is the community oriented policing services offices. It's not the most tortured acronym in the federal government, so it's actually not too bad or things considered. Yeah. Community oriented policing services.

Mike Scott:

Created to distribute billions of dollars to American police departments to hire 100,000 more police officers, basically a campaign promotional. Very

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Nice title just to put a ton of money into policing in America.

Mike Scott:

But only after it was developed, was it essentially given a mandate to make this money go for something like community policing. So they carved out a little bit of money to not just hire cops, but to do other things. And

Jerry Ratcliffe:

This is back when we had a functioning federal government.

Mike Scott:

It was. It was. They hired me, basically gave me this visiting fellowship. And what I proposed to do was to spend a year traveling around the UK, the United States, Canada to police agencies that had begun to experiment with problem-oriented policing and to implement it. What

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Tough job, but good for you for taking that on. Not

Mike Scott:

A bad way to make a living. So I ended up published this reflections on problem-oriented policing 20 years into its adoption. Almost as a footnote, I said one of the main things that the police field is still lacking in its long historical quest to become a profession is it doesn't have an organized body of research and practice-based knowledge for its practitioners. Doctors have it, lawyers have it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Engineers have it.

Mike Scott:

Even I found this body of knowledge for gardeners. So then another COPS office solicitation comes out essentially. I had some colleagues that I had worked with at PERF.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And we should say PERF is the Police Executive Research Forum. And this was back when they were actually really doing proper research too.

Mike Scott:

Well, that's right. That's a ways back. So they put out this solicitation and said, well, we would fund anyone who could begin to produce some products that would help community police officers be more effective. I had recently met Ron Clark.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And a former guest of the podcast.

Mike Scott:

Yeah. Leader of the Situational Crime Prevention Movement. So Ron and I put together this proposal along with a colleague named Ronna Sampson, a former New York City police officer.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And she was great fun too. 100 pounds soaking wet. I remember her telling me she was doing undercover work and she said something fascinating about her work in New York as a detective working undercover. She said that she won an award for the number of drug dealers she arrested because they sent her out to go and arrest drug dealers. But what she said that I thought was amazingly insightful, she said, "But if they told me to go out and stop the drug markets, I'd have done something completely different." What you task people to do and what they go and do, you have to think long and hard about what that is to either just get reactive policing.

Mike Scott:

Well, and that takes us back to that same question you asked previously. How do you get this to happen? You have to be very clear on what the objective is. If you define the objective as make arrests, cops will go and do that. If you define the objective as reduce crime, prevent crime, they go in a completely different direction.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Now you started to produce a whole ton of publications for the Center for Broad and More Into Policing, all of which is still available online now, which is fantastic. Immensely practical work created by often academics, but not in an academic style.

Mike Scott:

We spent a lot of time with other colleagues like Herman Goldstein, John Eck, and Deborah Lamweisel formatting, trying to get right what does a cop need?

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Because they certainly don't need academic journal articles. They do

Mike Scott:

Not.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

None of us needs academic journal articles, but got

Mike Scott:

To pay

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The bills. But they

Mike Scott:

Said, "But we want to know. We do want the academic knowledge. Translate it for us, synthesize it for us, make it concise, make it practical, and also include police practice. And a couple years in, well, let's propose that they fund, we'll create a center." And then we bring in a third colleague, Graham Newman, retired professor now from SUNY, Albany, an Australian, who is not really a policing scholar, but he knew publishing and he knew internet. And

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Ron

Mike Scott:

And I did not. So the three of us, Ron and Graham Newman and I, we create and we become the officers of this Center for Problem

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Oriented Policing. Excuse me. Center for Problem Oriented Policing. Now, something you mentioned a small while ago, this was needed to help policing become a profession. Do you think we're there?

Mike Scott:

No, not yet, but getting closer.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What is needed to get policing to be a profession then?

Mike Scott:

Well, this concept of building a body of knowledge has to become institutionalized. You can't say we wrote a pop guide on, say, The Problem of Street Prostitution, and we only do it once and never again. It has to be ongoing. You have to update it with new research, update it with evolving practice. You have to make that body of knowledge seen as being indispensable to practitioners in the way that say British doctors would say, if you don't know what the Lancet Journal is, if you don't consult it, if you don't stay abreast of what's being published in the Lancet and other medical journals, you have no business being a medical practitioner.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

One fascinating example there is something around 1994, David Bailey, a policing scholar wrote that the police don't prevent crime. And of course, what's happened since 1994 is there's been an explosion in research, especially around things like hotspots policing and focus deterrence. My pen colleague, Anthony Bragger, just wrote an updated systematic review that shows that focus deterrence is effective at reducing crime. Clearly the knowledge base of this field changes and it improves and it's continually dynamic, but how do we keep the field up to date with that?

Mike Scott:

Well, that's exactly what we're hoping to do with the Pop Guides and the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing. I think David Bailey was right in that he was essentially saying if police continue doing only what they do, investigating crimes, doing randomized patrol, rapid response, that is not going to prevent crime. What he didn't fully anticipate that the police actually could shift gears and actually become more knowledgeable, more preventive in their orientation, which they have.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Many places have. I think some people still lag and it comes back to that issue of you can still be successful in policing and have a career and really not engage with the professionalism side of the job at all.

Mike Scott:

And that's the fundamental problem. That should not be the case. You cannot, for example, say, I'm going to be a psychiatrist. I'm not going to read anything in latest research. I'm not going to keep up to date on latest medications. Everything I do is Sigmund Freud told us what to do back in the early 1900s even.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Never been that attracted to my mother. Which I think everybody's reassured to hear.

Mike Scott:

Yeah. We don't even say it for the most part. We don't even say as a chief of police, well, you better know something about situational crime prevention, problem-oriented policing. You better be up to speed on the preventive aspects of your profession. If you are not, if all you know about is reactive policing, then you're not qualified to be a police chief. That's where we have to get to.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Right. The model that's often been used by John Eck is the SARA model to scan problems, analyze, respond and assess. I have a PANDA model, which is problem, scan, analyze, and I take the response and I split it into nominating a strategy and actually figuring out what you want to do and deploying the strategy because having the strategy is one thing, but actually deploying it properly in the field is another. And then it has the assessment stage. So there's commonality throughout the system there, but both of us have this important role of analysis upfront. And it's one of the things that you said in your experience when it fails, it often fails at the analytical stage.

Mike Scott:

Well, it does. I think I've also observed that it most commonly fails at the implementation stage.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So

Mike Scott:

Your PANDA model is actually closer to what Goldstein originally envisioned. And you'll see it in his book, Problem Oriented Policing. We originally envisioned that response stage as being three distinctive phases. It was brainstorming for new possible approaches, selecting a plan, settling on -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's just mind nominating a strategy. Yeah.

Mike Scott:

And third is implementing it.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Deploying it. Yeah.

Mike Scott:

And it's the implementation where things often just fall apart because almost always the reason you are proposing a new approach is the old approach isn't working well. Anytime you propose change, you have to anticipate somebody is going to resist that because somebody has a vested interest in continuing with the status quo.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Even if they don't like it, sometimes they just don't want to change.

Mike Scott:

Exactly. You're going to have to overcome that natural organizational or institutionalized resistance. And that's where implementation often just, it fizzles out.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I'm grateful to hear that my approach of separating response into nominating and then deploying a strategy is closer to Herman's thinking in that area. People are familiar with the literature increasingly now. The challenge though is they can't actually implement Or deploy it and get it functioning in their police departments.

Mike Scott:

Yeah. And actually what you just previously alluded to, Anthony Braga's review was focused deterrence. Focus deterrence was developed as a problem-oriented policing project involving the Boston Police in the late 1990s.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

And if I recall, there was really an innovative sergeant that kind of really drove it locally.

Mike Scott:

Yeah, actually it was key person within the Boston Police Department. Gary French was his name. Gary French in the Boston Police Department who said in working with David Kennedy and Anthony Praga at Harvard, he said, "By God, this is really good stuff." And without him, it simply would not have happened.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

As with so many projects, I think we really sometimes fail to recognize the sacrifices that some people in policing, they put their career on hold to stick with something for some years to really drive it through.

Mike Scott:

That's one of the things we've learned about focus deterrence is well, two main things. It works. We also know it's just hard to do. And that's the fundamental challenge again.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So with deploying a strategy, the implementation being one of the struggling parts of this, if I come and speak at the Problem-Oriented Policing Conference and sell the PANDA model, will you support it of the SARA model? Oh, of

Mike Scott:

Course. Yeah. Well -

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Buy you a beer, you're easy to buy off.

Mike Scott:

Oh, I had to buy my own coffee today.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I an get you another one.

Mike Scott:

The Canadians came up with CAPRA as their model. They had other models, The Five Eyes in the UK. And I've always said, Nick Tilley and I have gone back and forth on this and said, "Look, it doesn't much matter what we call it so long

as it's clear what is meant, you understand the concept." But the downside is to SARA is you get to that response phase and you oversimplify it. Yes.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

What's next for Problem-Oriented Policing?

Mike Scott:

I think it's going to need police administrators to engage with it, but I think really the key is going to be in the police professional research community where you think about what drives the knowledge base in medicine. Well, it's journals like Lancet, the New England Journal of Medicine, the Journal of American Medical Association. These are the kind of professional organizations, associations that keep its practitioners prized of knowledge and hold them to, in some respects, accountable for being aware of that knowledge.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

I wouldn't say that we have a particularly robust police professional research community. I would describe it as fledgling.

Mike Scott:

It is in a longer history. So we have a bit of it in the UK has now become something else, but it's

Jerry Ratcliffe:

The- The College of Policing, but I think it's about to change again. The

Mike Scott:

College of Policing and the Chief Constables Association.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

National Police Chief's Council, yeah.

Mike Scott:

In addition, in the UK, very importantly, there is His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. That entity exists to hold British police agencies accountable for certain performance, now including proactive preventive problem-solving.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

So I think where that's key is that the accountability is to people who understand policing. Whereas in so much in the United States, and you are a police chief, the accountability is to a mayor who could have been a realtor or a plumber last week.

Mike Scott:

Well, it's highly variable in the United States.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Yeah.

Mike Scott:

Some places you're accountable to an elected mayor. Some places you're accountable to an appointed city manager. Some places you're accountable to a police board. I think in the United States, we have found that the city manager form of government tends to produce the most professional and most efficient type performance of government. Not all communities in the country adopt that model, but where they do, they tend to be more efficient, more effective, less corrupt. And that means effectively that if we adopt that model more widely, that we have to make sure city managers themselves are educated, and this is a weak spot in the difference between good and bad policing.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

It's a great way to summarize where we are and where we need to be going to. Are you optimistic for the future of problems in policing?

Mike Scott:

I think so. As John Echol would always say, what's the alternative that we get stupider, that we get less interested in what does and doesn't work.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Careful what you wish for.

Mike Scott:

It's possible, but as he says, it's really the only way forward.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

Well, Mike, thanks very much for coming out grabbing a cup of coffee and sitting by this fire pit and staving off the bit of a chill we have this morning. I really appreciate it, man. Thanks so much. Very

Mike Scott:

70 degree weather.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

No, first of all problems.

Mike Scott:

I enjoyed it. Thank you, Jerry.

Jerry Ratcliffe:

That was episode 97 of Reducing Crime recorded in January 2026 in Mesa, Arizona. If you teach, DM me for multiple choice questions for every episode, and you can find a transcript of this episode at reducingcrime.com. Now be a good egg and subscribe to this podcast at Spotify, SoundCloud, Apple, or wherever you pod.

Be safe and best of luck.