

# The Process and Partnerships Behind Insight Policing

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## **Abstract**

Between 2012 and 2014, civilian conflict analysis and resolution researchers partnered with two American police departments to develop and pilot Insight Policing, a community-based, problem-solving policing strategy that integrates Insight conflict resolution skills with policing skills to help reduce retaliatory violence and enhance police legitimacy in the moment of enforcement. Although responding to conflict is familiar to police officers, Insight Policing offers a new orientation to do so. Its development was possible because the researchers were invited to collaborate, responded to the needs of the departments, and delivered their training in a way that was compatible with existing policing norms and practice. This article explores how the partnerships developed and the way that Insight conflict resolution principles guided their success.

## **Keywords**

insight policing, conflict theory, police decision-making, police strategy, community policing, crime prevention

Police officers find themselves responding to conflict on a regular basis, particularly as conflict behavior escalates into criminal behavior: when the yelling next door turns to blows, when disrespect becomes a drive-by, when noncooperation with an officer deteriorates into assault. Being able to identify conflict behavior in the process of responding to and investigating crime is at the core of Insight Policing.

Insight Policing was developed as a practical response to the difficult to police problem of retaliatory violence and community noncooperation. A team of civilian researchers, including myself, from George Mason University's Insight Conflict Resolution

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Program in collaboration with two American police departments, Memphis, TN and Lowell, MA, launched a project called the Retaliatory Violence Insight Project (RVIP) to explore how the conflict framework of the Insight approach to conflict analysis and resolution (Insight approach) could help officers predict and prevent retaliatory violence. Through RVIP, we developed Insight Policing and trained officers to use Insight Policing skills to identify, understand, and defuse escalating conflict behavior, behavior that routinely becomes criminal.

This article explores the process and the partnerships that made the development of Insight Policing possible.

## **Academic and Police Partnerships**

Many academics have partnered with police departments over the years, and the value of such partnerships has become more and more appreciated (Braga, Lum, & Davis, 2014). Although police departments have a reputation for being “closed shops,” many are open to collaborative partnerships because they believe in developing and using the best policing practices possible for the safety of the public (Innes, 2010). Problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1990) as well as evidence-based policing (Lum & Koper, 2014), both standard policing goals across departments, suggest that research findings, and by extension the academic researchers who find them, are key to policing effectively.

Scholars have written about their experiences collaborating with police practitioners and have suggested some key components to effective collaboration that resonate with our experience. Marks, Wood, Ally, Walsh, and Witbooi (2010) suggest that the quality of the research questions are key. As long as the research comes across as real and relevant, it will resonate. Because we became involved at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and were invited to collaborate by the Lowell, MA and Memphis, TN police departments, the research we conducted and the practice that we developed were as real and relevant as it comes—the questions originated with the police departments themselves. However, an invitation is just a foot in the door. We found that collaboration depends on what Caldwell and Dorling (1995) emphasize: the importance of mutual trust and respect, and on what Engel and Whalen (2010) emphasize: listening to the experience and expertise of police officers and department leaders.

In addition to relevance, trust, respect, and listening, what we add to the scholarship on police–academic partnerships is a curiosity oriented by the Insight approach (Melchin & Picard, 2009; Price, 2013). The Insight approach suggests that to understand why we choose to do what we do—both in conflict and out of conflict—we must pay attention to and become curious about how we are using our minds.

What the Insight approach demonstrates is that while we typically use our minds without even noticing that we are doing so, we can consciously turn our attention to the use of our minds. When we do, we recognize that it is possible to differentiate the things that we know from how we use our minds to come to know them, the feelings we have from how we use our minds to understand how something matters to us, and

the actions we take from how we use our minds to decide to take those actions. Price (2013) writes,

Once we differentiate the conscious act of deciding from the act decided upon, it becomes possible to attend explicitly to the fact that deciding (*What will I do?*) is a function of an inner performance of evaluating (*What should I do? What is best here?*), which is a function of an inner performance of deliberating (*What could I do?*), which is a function of [the] conscious valuing of [ones] concrete circumstances: their apprehension of . . . value (*So what? How does this matter to me?*). (p. 119)

What Price is saying is that every action we take is preceded by a series of mental operations. To fully understand what we do and why we do it, it is necessary (and possible) to pay attention to the mental steps we took to get there. When we attend to these, we become curious about how we (or someone else) have used our minds to answer the inner, performative questions that Price lists above and that precede the carrying out of an act. We ask questions like “How *does* this matter to you?” “What options did you see?” “What made the option you chose the best considering the circumstances?” “What were you hoping for?” “What were you trying to prevent?” These kinds of questions, which are foundational Insight skills, get at the mental operations that precede an act. By doing so, they generate a more complete understanding of it. This allows, most importantly, for understanding a person’s behavior on her own terms—in terms of her own self-understanding and decision-making. This matters, because to fully understand an action and to develop the most appropriate response to it, we must understand why that action was taken in the first place.

In developing our partnerships, we paid close attention to the framework and techniques of the Insight approach. We did this for two reasons: to gain critical control of our own decision-making as we built our partnerships, and to understand not just the statistics on retaliatory violence in the communities where we worked but also what retaliatory violence meant to police departments and their officers, what challenges it posed, and how those meanings and challenges shaped their everyday responses to it. Gaining critical control of our own decision-making meant being open to and curious about the decisions we made and being flexible in how we addressed the challenges we came across. Working to understand the unique perspectives of each department on retaliatory violence helped us identify the core problem of retaliatory violence for policing and develop and implement a training that addressed it.

Framed by the curiosity of the Insight approach, three elements came together to set the stage for the partnerships that led to Insight Policing. These elements organize the article that follows. First, we were given the opportunity and the invitation to collaborate. Second, we developed a strategy that was responsive to the concerns of the police officers and leaders we were working with. Third, we were able to provide information and training in a way that was practically useful to the police departments’ needs and compatible with existing training and practice. Of course, as all creative processes, these elements did not come without challenges and lessons, which we were able to address through careful attention to what we were doing with our minds.

## **The Opportunity and the Invitation**

Like many successful collaborations, our partnerships with the Memphis and Lowell police departments began with an invitation, initially in the form of Request for Proposal (RFP) Number 1121-0329 from the BJA. In that RFP, BJA specifically asked for conflict resolution experts to help untangle an apparently intractable problem that had emerged in the last decade: the problem of retaliatory homicide.

Against a background of significant overall drops in crime nationwide, FBI data show a troubling trend in homicide. Between 2000 and 2013, 77% of homicides, where relationships were known, involved offenders and victims who knew each other, and roughly 71% of homicides, where circumstances were known, were precipitated by arguments or gang activity (FBI Expanded Homicide Reports [United States Department of Justice, 2015]). What these numbers indicate is that most of the lethal violence in the United States is not a consequence of random aggression, but of violent, tit-for-tat, retaliatory responses to interpersonal conflicts. Police departments have been eager to find ways to respond to this phenomenon and reverse the trend.

“Repeatedly,” BJA (2011) writes in their solicitation, “law enforcement officials in conversations with BJA staff have referenced [retaliatory violence] as particularly difficult and challenging in terms of prevention and investigation” (p. 4). Because of the swift and deliberate nature of retaliatory violence, police officers are often placed in a reactive mode and left to manage the aftereffects of retaliatory crime. As Captain Bill Taylor (now Superintendent) of Lowell’s police department described it to us, “It’s like we see thunderclouds over the city, but don’t know where the lightning is going to strike.” To address this challenge, BJA looked beyond the boundaries of criminology in the hope that discoveries from the field of conflict analysis and resolution could help reposition officers to predict and prevent retaliatory violence. In this sense, we were invited to offer our outside expertise on the problem of retaliatory violence, a problem explicitly identified by police agencies themselves.

The invitation is logical. It does not take a conflict resolution specialist to recognize that a pattern of retaliatory violence is a pattern of conflict. Nor is it a stretch to recognize that officers spend roughly 90% of their time on service-related calls that are spurred by conflicts (Birzer, 1999; Goldstein, 1979). As Morton Bard pointed out in 1973, “the management of interpersonal conflict is probably the largest single subset of the police function” (p. 68).

The operating assumption has long been that conventional law enforcement models and techniques are adequate for dealing with the conflict side of policing. However, BJA’s 2011 solicitation was an acknowledgment that traditional law enforcement techniques are not adequate for meeting the challenge of retaliatory violence and that something else is needed. This recognition is not new. Twenty-five years ago, Roger Graef (1992) noted that while “classical policing is about conflict resolution, . . . conventional policing is equally inadequate to [its] task . . . [P]olice in their fire fighting mode are singularly inappropriate agents of peace and understanding” (p. ix). Today, this same point is the principal refrain of the procedural justice literature: Threats of force and the projection of power tend to heighten conflicts between officers and

citizens, not mitigate them, making their ability to address the conflicts they encounter between citizens even more challenging to police effectively (Mazerolle, Bennett, Davis, Sargeant, & Manning, 2013).

Earlier efforts to import conflict resolution practices and solutions into law enforcement have fared marginally. The main example is the effort to integrate conflict mediation into policing. The hope for this initiative, sparked by Bard's work on conflict management training with police in the late 1960s, was that if officers could mediate civilian disputes, it would lead to fewer repeat calls and an increased sense of officer legitimacy (Bard, 1973; Berger, 2000; C. Cooper, 1997; Goldstein, 1979, 1990; Muir, 1977). However, for a variety of reasons, training police officers in mediation skills never successfully penetrated police culture. For one, local police departments did not widely champion its use (C. Cooper, 2003; Palenski, 1984). Also, the practice of "empowering" civilians to decide for themselves the outcomes of their conflicts, as is standard in mediation practice, is in stark opposition to the traditional authoritative role of the police officer (C. Cooper, 1997; C. Cooper, 2003). And, in practical terms, there was the concern that officers' calls would pile up during the "time out-of-service" that officers would need to spend mediating civilian disputes (Buerger, Petrosino, & Petrosino, 1999; C. Cooper, 1997). Ironically, most mediations officers are involved in these days are those involving the resolution of civilian complaints against them (Prenzler & Porter, 2016).

The tides are turning, it would seem, as departments are again looking to conflict strategies to enhance policing. However, history has made clear that transposing conflict strategies onto police practice, or adding conflict resolution to officers' already overburdened register of duties, is not the most sustainable approach. Our task therefore, now that we had been invited to participate, was to figure out how conflict resolution theory and practice could be integrated into policing practice as officers responded to retaliatory violence and fulfilled their ordinary duties in the field.

## **Using the Insight Approach to Be Responsive to the Concerns of Police Officers**

As we embarked on our partnerships with Lowell and Memphis, we recognized that we would need to notice and be curious about them on their own terms to get the information we needed to integrate conflict strategies into policing practice in a way that would best respond to their departments' needs around retaliatory violence.

We used the framework and principles of the Insight approach to notice and be curious, the same framework and principles that would inform Insight Policing. In the context of our work with Lowell and Memphis, we became curious about the problem of retaliatory violence as each city experienced it and about how those experiences influenced how departments made decisions to respond. Without being curious and asking, we believed, any "solution" we would have devised would have been delivered out of context, diminishing the likelihood that officers would use it in the field.

Our curiosity took the form of conversations and interviews with department leaders, officers, community groups, and community members. We drew on the Insight approach and paid explicit attention to how officers and leaders were using their minds to make

decisions about what to do about retaliatory violence. We asked not just their opinions but also how retaliatory violence mattered to them and how what mattered patterned how they decided to respond. Through these conversations, we unpacked how representatives from each city understood, valued, and responded to retaliatory violence. We used what we learned to develop Insight Policing. Below is what we found.

## **Lowell**

In Lowell, we discovered from our conversations that among the officers with whom we spoke most saw retaliatory violence as crime first and retaliation second. For them, retaliatory violence is homicide or aggravated assault. Why it happens, one officer remarked, “is something for the investigators to work out” (interview, Lowell, July, 2012).

We found that Lowell officers tended to see themselves as preventing crime, retaliatory or otherwise, by deterring it. When they know their areas, know the players, know the cars the players drive, and show up when they think violence is going to happen, they put a lid on violence for a while. According to officers, stopping violence and criminal behavior even in the short term provides space for people to change their minds and make nonviolent choices. But when officers are unable to get to the scene—when violence happens before they have the chance to deter it—then they are left to pick up its pieces.

Picking up its pieces is extraordinarily hard. In Lowell, the officers’ biggest challenge was getting victims and witnesses to cooperate with them. From the moment they arrived on the scene of a crime, civilians frequently refused to talk. One officer told us a story of a stabbing victim who explained to him as he was bleeding out of his shoulder: “Nothing happened, officer. I fell on a box cutter” (interview, Lowell, July, 2012). Officers in Lowell found this kind of resistance to cooperation inexplicable. Why would a victim not want the police to apprehend the person who stabbed him? After all, we found that Lowell police officers overwhelmingly felt that their job is to protect the community, to hold criminals accountable, and to keep people safe (interview, Lowell, July, 2012). While baffling to them, one officer concluded that it is “just the way things are” (interview, July, Lowell, 2012).

A community perspective on this, which we were able to cull from seven conversations with community members, including one conversation with an active gang member, helped us understand the situation. Noncooperation is normative because there is a sense that the police stereotype community members from high crime areas. They feel that police are “out to get them,” not to protect them (interview, July Lowell, 2012). Justice, therefore, takes an alternative, often violent, retaliatory route. And while “it sucks that we do that,” the gang member we spoke with said, “it’s an ugly mess, but that’s how it is” (interview, July Lowell, 2012).

To deepen our understanding of what we were learning in Lowell about retaliatory violence, we asked Lowell’s intelligence unit if they could share with us scenarios of retaliatory violence that officers had responded to. When we received a compilation of reports of incidents that had led to arrest, we found that the incidents were not retaliatory

insofar as community members were violent with each other but were retaliatory behaviors against the responding officers: disorderly conduct, noncompliance, and assault. Civilians were being arrested for things they had done once the officer arrived on the scene, not for what they had done to get the officer there in the first place. When we asked about this, the intelligence unit explained that they had no way of pulling reports on explicitly retaliatory cases between civilians, because officers often do not know when incidents are retaliatory. “The public doesn’t tell them what the incident is related to. The officers respond. That’s what they do” (interview, July Lowell, 2012).

What emerged was that civilian noncompliance, the major obstacle officers identified to policing retaliatory violence, was generating conflict between civilians and officers during other routine encounters. Interactions between officers and civilians were inadvertently playing into a conflict cycle of their own.

## Memphis

Unlike in Lowell, our conversations in Memphis uncovered that officers were intimately aware of retaliatory violence within Memphis communities. In Memphis, we worked with the Community Outreach Program (COP), a new division within the department designed specifically to circumvent community and retaliatory violence by rebuilding community–police relationships. During our first visit with Major Green, the Major in charge of COP, she said to our team, “Where were you yesterday?” as she recounted an incident where a girl jumped another girl at a neighborhood recreation center because of a Facebook posting (interview, Memphis, May 2012). She had dozens of examples and was deeply aware of the tragedy of violent retaliation in Memphis, as were the officers she supervised.

What we learned was that the focus of the Memphis Police Department, and of COP in particular, was to promote a new kind of deterrence in Memphis. “Arresting people is not controlling crime. We want to deter crime in a more positive manner,” they told us (interview, Memphis, August, 2012). COP, therefore, was engaging in proactive community policing and “building that bridge between police and citizens” (interview, Memphis, August, 2012). To do this, COP led field trips, ran boxing camps, knocked on doors, cleaned up parks, walked beats, and imbued their policing duties with a culture of curiosity—always wanting to find out “what” was going on in a neighborhood that needed to be addressed and “why” people were turning to crime, all with the goal of crime prevention through enhanced community trust.

But building trust, they told us, involves a delicate balance. While building trust is a top priority, ultimately, a Memphis officer’s job is to enforce the law (interview, Memphis, August, 2012). One officer’s experience was that “building relationships is tricky when we have to enforce the law with people who we’ve built trust with” (interview, Memphis, August, 2012). This is because the prevention work of COP happens in one arena, through trust building and education, and enforcement happens in another. The tools for each are distinct. “When a crime has been committed, we have to respond,” said one COP officer (interview, Memphis, August, 2012). “When a crime has been committed, I have to do my job,” another added. “I can’t talk to the kid like I’d like to”

(interview, Memphis, August, 2012). In enforcement mode, the tools that officers employ in trust-building mode fall away. They follow procedure—"diffuse the situation, make arrests, give the young person a lecture," leaving officers with the feeling that they have compromised the trust they have built (interview, Memphis, August, 2012).

In enforcement mode, Memphis officers reported encountering resistance from community members, primarily noncooperation and disrespect—responses that fuel the police–civilian conflict cycles that get in the way of officers' efforts to build trust. One officer candidly described that

it all comes down to respect. When [civilians] disrespect police, guess what. The police have feelings, emotions. And they are going to use their personal feelings and emotions to vent back . . . you can't take the humanity out of a person. (interview, Memphis, August, 2012)

Officers who are on the streets doing their best to humanize themselves, respect civilians, and build trust with them often meet defensiveness and aggression when they try to do their jobs to enforce the law. The result is that situations escalate and trust breaks down, making it difficult for officers to gain the cooperation they need to police communities effectively, particularly when responding to crimes of retaliatory violence.

Our findings correlate with what other scholars have found over the last decade: that there is a relationship between retaliatory violence and police legitimacy. Research shows that citizens in communities with high levels of retaliatory violence tend to feel that they cannot trust the police to protect them or to help them resolve the arguments and conflicts that lead to violent retaliation (Kane, 2005; Meares, 2009; Meares & Fagan, 2008; Samuel, 2006). When communities do not trust the police, they do not cooperate. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that in the 5 years from 2006 to 2010, 52% of violent crimes went unreported to the police, 34% of those cases went unreported because victims decided to deal with the problem themselves, and another 16% went unreported because victims felt police either could not or would not help them (Berzofsky, Krebs, Langton, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012). Between 2000 and 2013, police departments have been unable to determine the circumstances around homicides an average of 35% of the time and have been unable to determine the relationship between victims and offenders an average of 44% of the time (FBI Expanded Homicide Reports [United States Department of Justice, 2015]).

However, our curiosity revealed more to us than the fact that civilians in high crime communities often refuse to cooperate. Our curiosity revealed that conflicts between civilians and police often escalated when civilians did not to cooperate, regardless of the level of trust they had going into a situation. This, most critically, was undermining officers' efforts to prevent retaliatory crime.

The challenge, we discovered, was how to help officers transform the conflicts that they find themselves in with community members, so that they can generate cooperation and build trust in the trickiest and most contentious of situations: while enforcing the law with civilians who are already weary of its legitimacy.



## Insight Policing as Practically Useful

Building on the discovery, anchored in the experiences of officers, that maintaining trust in the moment of enforcement was a critical challenge they faced in addressing retaliatory violence, we hypothesized that officers could use Insight conflict resolution skills in their civilian encounters to overcome it. To use Insight conflict resolution skills, officers needed to broaden what they paid attention to. Traditional policing has officers paying attention to criminal behavior. Officers develop a keen awareness of the environmental and social cues that indicate it. What Insight Policing does is hone officers' attention to conflict behavior.

Insight Policing draws on the observation of the Insight approach that the defensive and aggressive things that people do in conflict, what we call "conflict behavior," are a function of the way we use our minds in conflict. Specifically, two key variables are at play: an anticipation of threat and a decision to defend against it (Melchin & Picard, 2009; Price, 2013). When officers are able to recognize conflict behavior, become curious about these two variables and ask directed questions to elicit them, two things happen.

First, the officer creates space for de-escalation. Being asked Insight questions gives the person exhibiting conflict behavior the experience of being heard and attended to on his own terms. When a person who is feeling threatened and is behaving defensively feels heard and attended to, there is a spontaneous reduction in his need to defend. This brings down the tension in an encounter and allows the officer to regain control of an otherwise escalating situation.

Second, and crucially, the officer is able to use the information he gets about the threat and defense patterning a person's conflict behavior to make targeted and precise law enforcement decisions, ones that are not reactive, but thoughtful, contextual, and take the citizen into account. When officers engage with community members on their own terms using Insight Policing skills, it enhances the officers' ability to police difficult situations effectively and with legitimacy, in other words in a way that the civilian feels is fair (for officer accounts of using Insight Policing in the field, see Price & Price, 2015).

Training in Insight Policing as a demonstration began in the early months of 2013. We trained 24 Lowell officers in basic Insight Policing strategies and 19 Memphis COP officers in basic and advanced Insight Policing strategies. There were five key Insight Policing training objectives. First, officers learned to differentiate their own thoughts, feelings, and actions from how they used their minds to think, feel, and decide to act: the basic method of the Insight approach. Second, officers learned to identify when their actions were conflict behaviors spurred by feelings of threat and decisions to defend against threat. Third, officers learned to identify conflict behavior in others, particularly in instances of criminal behavior. Fourth, officers learned how to notice and become curious about others on their own terms and use Insight questions to elicit the threat and defense motivating their behavior. And fifth, they learned how to use the information they elicited to make targeted and precise enforcement decisions.

Both departments welcomed the Insight Policing training that we had developed, largely because they had been integral to helping us isolate the problems they faced with respect to policing retaliatory violence. Once basic training got underway, however, we encountered resistance from a handful of officers. It was here where we learned that we had stumbled in structuring the training in a way that was compatible with existing training and practice.

As we delivered our theory about identifying conflict behavior in instances of criminal behavior and engaging community members on their own terms using the Insight approach, officers began remarking:

This is all well and good, but we don't have time for conflict resolution.

Things get hot quickly. We have to maintain control.

Our first responsibility is to protect ourselves and our partners.

For our part, we were surprised. We thought that through all of our careful curiosity we had found the crux of the problem—the conflicts that escalate between officers and civilians in the moment of enforcement—and the precise incision point for the Insight approach. Here we were, though, feeling defensive at the officers' skepticism and trying to convince the skeptics that Insight Policing was useful.

Because we were tuned in to the Insight approach, we realized quickly that trying to convince officers that Insight Policing was useful was conflict behavior on our part. We were defending against the threatening possibilities that we were wrong and that the officers would reject what we had put so much work into developing. We stepped back from our decision to convince and took stock. We had been delivering our approach on the basis that we shared with these officers an understanding about retaliatory violence and how they were addressing it. But there was something missing and we needed to discover what that was.

So, we asked. Rather than remaining defensive, we turned on our curiosity, as the Insight approach suggests, right there in the classroom. How were the officers seeing what we were proposing as incompatible? Their answers revolved around their policing practice—the short time they have, their need to make quick determinations to keep people safe. What we discovered was that while we had a comprehensive picture of retaliatory violence and of the difficulties that officers had encouraging cooperation and maintaining trust in enforcement, we had little understanding of what their routine practices actually were. We had not thought to ask.

Later on that day at a downtown Memphis bar over lemon icebox pie, Major Green helped fill in what we were missing. As we sat in the booth together we asked her what we had neglected to ask in the months leading up to the training: How do officers do what they do? What is the fundamental framework they use in their routine policing and law enforcement tasks?

To illustrate, Major Green nodded toward a man walking into the bar wearing a long, black trench coat. Officers, she explained, are extraordinarily attuned to notice

threat in their environments. Almost second nature, they strategically position themselves in public places, never with their backs to a crowd. They note the entrances and exits. They track patterns of behavior and notice every abnormality. They have a keen sensibility about their environments. While wearing a trench coat is neither a threat nor a crime in and of itself, especially in the middle of February, had it been the middle of July, she would have taken that coat as reasonable suspicion of criminal behavior and investigated further to confirm or deny probable cause. Her investigation would have revealed whether the man had weapons beneath his coat, or had on nothing at all, or just had a high tolerance for warm clothes on hot days. Depending on what she found, she would have made decisions to best maintain the public safety and enforce the law.

The parallel between noticing reasonable suspicion of criminal behavior and the Insight strategy of noticing conflict behavior struck us. The next step, investigating probable cause, paralleled the Insight strategy of becoming curious about how a person is using her mind to decide to use conflict behavior. We began to piece out these parallels and discovered that the law enforcement framework that police were accustomed to using in their daily activities—notice reasonable suspicion, investigate probable cause, formulate solutions—was a compatible framework for what we were trying to convey in terms of understanding and transforming conflict behavior. We realized that if we could convey Insight Policing to the officers on their own terms with reference to the law enforcement framework they were familiar with, the skeptics might come around. We reconfigured the next day's training to reflect our discovery and integrated our Insight skills instruction into the sharp sense of observation and analysis officers rely on everyday. We had not picked up on this before beginning the training because we had not experienced its significance. We were only able to discover its significance once we used the framework of the Insight approach to notice and become curious about how we were using our minds as we reacted to the officers' initial skepticism of Insight Policing.

Our experience demonstrates an important point in Insight Policing. By recognizing and identifying our own reactions, we were able to become curious about how we were using our minds in reacting that way. We recognized the threat of the skeptical officers and our defensive reaction to them. That reflexivity—that curiosity about ourselves—opened up the possibility for being curious about the officers, which led us to discover what we had initially missed about their skills and frameworks as police officers. Our curiosity opened the possibility for broader knowing, expanded valuing, and more precise decision-making.

In an evaluation interview we conducted with a Memphis officer 1 year after the training, we saw that using Insight Policing skills on duty had a similar effect. This Memphis officer recounted a time when he was at an area Walmart, where he observed a woman who, in his words, “was pretty agitated because she wanted to get in line and the line had closed.” She was yelling at the cashier and making a scene. When he walked up to her to calm her down, she became even more agitated and began directing her anger at him. Before his training in Insight Policing, he said, “I would have locked her up for disorderly conduct.” Her behavior was enough for the officer to determine that she

was breaking the law by compromising the safety and peace of the people around her. But first noticing his own reaction to her, and then noticing that her criminal behavior was also conflict behavior, and recognizing that her decisions to act were more than unlawful actions but rooted in the way she was using her mind, he became curious about her. He used his Insight Policing skills to address the woman's conflict behavior. What was she so angry about and what was she hoping for by lashing out at him and the store cashier? The officer described what he discovered: The woman, it turned out, was late to pick up her daughter, had had a bad experience with another officer, and was taking it out on him. When she experienced the officer trying to understand her, she calmed down and got in line. The officer reflected: "trying to see if you can find the reason for the problem changes the situation every time" (interview, Memphis, 2014).

What using Insight Policing skills to first notice and then become curious about how the woman was using her mind did for this officer was help him find the reason for the problem and open up alternative responses. The Walmart woman's yelling was initially seen to be conduct that required criminal detention until the officer became curious about it in a way that diffused her anger. When he did that, he was able to get critical information about the action—why it was taken, its basis, and its goals. The woman felt like she needed to check out immediately so she could go and get her daughter, and when the officer intervened, she felt she needed to defend herself against him because she was worried about the actions he was going to take against her. Having that information, the officer was able to empathize with her feeling rushed and delink the threat that she was feeling about him. When the officer gave her the opportunity to reflect on and express the motivations behind her actions, she got insights about her actions and her concerns that allowed her to calm down, buy her things, and be on her way without further incident.

What is critical about the Walmart example is that the officer policed the situation successfully and solved the problem of the angry woman in the checkout lane by engaging first with how he was using his own mind and then engaging her in terms of how she was using hers. When the officer recognized his impulse to arrest the woman for disorderly conduct, he recognized it as decision to defend against the threat of her challenging his authority. Instead of acting on it, he became curious about her conflict behavior and asked her about it so that he could understand it in terms of where she was coming from.

When we can engage others on their own terms, we learn about them on their own terms and understand them on their own terms. When we engage with them on our terms, we project what we think we know onto them, which often leads to unproductive decisions that miss the mark and can escalate contentious situations. Arresting the woman for disorderly conduct certainly would have taken her out of the store, but it would have done nothing to get her to her daughter safely or to change her experience of police officers. Similarly, during the first day of basic Insight Policing training, we solved our problem of skeptical officers by engaging them on their own terms to understand the significance of their policing skills and frameworks. Continuing to try to convince the officers of the utility of Insight Policing without learning about their practice would have done nothing to facilitate their learning. In both cases, using

Insight Policing skills to become curious led to expanded understanding and more effective responses.

Officers described other instances in which the tension in high-conflict, potentially dangerous police–civilian encounters like warrant pickups, traffic stops, and responding to shots fired dropped noticeably when the officer became curious about the civilian’s conflict behavior. In a posttraining survey, 92% of officers from both cities agreed that what they learned in basic Insight Policing training was useful for their work as a police officer and 80% of officers agreed that training in Insight Policing enhanced their ability to defuse the feelings of threat citizens had about their encounters with police officers (RVIP program evaluation survey, 2013). While more rigorous evaluation is needed, on the basis of these reports, it appears that the trainings in Insight Policing we developed and delivered generated an immediate, positive impact on the ability of officers to carry out their regular law enforcement duties with legitimacy, something that over time could have an impact on the decisions of community members to take justice into their own hands by retaliation.

The key to this success was that we were guided by the Insight approach to notice and be curious about the self-understanding and decision-making of our partner departments and their officers, as well as our own. As a result, we were able to forge strong partnerships with the Lowell and Memphis police departments. These partnerships enabled us to learn about some of the complexities of retaliatory violence in each city, provide officers with an analytical framework for investigating and understanding conflict behavior that fit with the analytical framework for investigating and understanding criminal behavior that they already possessed, and develop Insight Policing as a strategy for targeting the problem of retaliatory violence where it counted most for each department—within the moment of everyday enforcement, where building trust and policing with legitimacy are most important.

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