Abstract: Many approaches have been taken in an attempt to reduce firearm crime. Using a problem oriented police approach, pulling levers strategies combine the use of a strong deterrence message and community involvement to reduce crime. The success of a pulling levers program in Boston, Operation Ceasefire, has resulted in many replications of pulling levers strategies in cities across the US. The evaluations of these programs have also produced encouraging results for the effectiveness of pulling levers strategies on firearm violence reduction.

1. Describe the Program or Strategy.

Pulling Levers is a term used to refer to a deterrence based strategy of policing. It is often utilized in an attempt to reduce violence in cities across the nation. It is a less conventional means of violence reduction in that it depends heavily on social service organizations as well as law enforcement. Problem oriented policing strategies are the framework for pulling levers. Problem oriented policing also is based on collaboration between police and their community. The goal of POP is to identify root causes of crime and provide law enforcement and social service solutions.

Pulling Levers programs are typically implemented in order to reduce crime in a specific area. When designing a pulling levers strategy, the law enforcement agency usually will select a certain crime of interest. Next, research and existing data must be examined in order to determine the target area, identify offenders, and establish other relevant information. The results will be used in order to construct an intervention. The appropriate social service and community agencies must be contacted and join in the collaboration with law enforcement. Police reach out to the targeted offenders, and they are made aware that their activities will be closely monitored. In addition, police relay specific punishments and consequences for continued offending. Often harsher sentences
are put into place in order to emphasize the deterrence message. This outreach creates a deterrent effect; in addition, law enforcement explain why offender's are being targeted and offer social service solutions (Braga, 2008).


2. **What types of crime is it intended to prevent or reduce?**

Pulling levers can be utilized in an attempt to reduce a variety of crimes. Programs across the country have used pulling levers to target homicide, drug use, gang violence, etc. For the purpose of this review, pulling levers will be examined in situations when it has been used to reduce firearm violence.

3. **Is the program or something similar reviewed on Blueprints for Violence Prevention (http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/) or Crime Solutions (www.crimesolutions.gov)? Provide Citations.**

Several pulling levers programs have been reviewed by Crime Solutions. Two pertaining to gun violence prevention were found to be effective. Two others were also found to be promising. One of these studies related to gun violence and the other targeted drug market intervention.

4. **Is there a clear theoretical foundation?**

A few theories exist that explain the rationale behind pulling levers. Deterrence theory posits that fear of punishment will prevent offenders from committing crime. In order for deterrence to work, the offender must believe that they will be punished, and in order for it to be most effective, three elements of deterrence must occur. The certainty,
severity, and celerity of punishment must be present. If offenders do not believe there is a large chance that they will be caught, they will not be dissuaded from their crime. The punishment must also be severe enough that it outweighs the benefits that committing the crime provide. Lastly, punishment must occur quickly after the actual performance of the crime (Jordan & Myers, 2008).

Merton’s Strain Theory also contributes to many of the ideas behind pulling levers interventions. Strain theory posits that it is a lack of legitimate opportunities that leads to crime. Those who lack these opportunities turn to criminal behavior in order to accomplish their goals (Murphy & Robinson, 2008). Providing social service and community agencies as resources for offenders and potential offenders is a key aspect of pulling levers and POP. The idea is that with the help of these agencies, offenders will be able to avoid any deviant behavior and revert to lawful behaviors.


5. **Is there a direct, indirect or no clear theoretical link to crime reduction?**

Many cases exist in which pulling levers strategies produce statistically significant reductions in gun violence. Multiple examples of effective implementation allow an intervention to be recognized as an evidence-based practice. Examples of successful pulling levers programs which have produced statistically significant reductions in gun violence can be found in cities across the United States.

6. **Describe the logic model. Diagram it. How is it intended to reduce crime?**
Pulling levers and problem oriented policing programs attempt to reduce crime by explaining why the target crime is occurring. Once this root cause(s) of crime is identified, research must be done in order to determine the relevant elements that the program will address. An appropriate intervention will be developed which will include the basic elements of pulling levers: deterrence and community participation. Lastly, an evaluation of the program must take place in order to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

7. **Does this program or strategy exist in this community? If yes, what agency is it run through? How long has it been in existence here? How is it funded?**

Rochester has not yet experimented with a pulling levers strategy to reduce gun violence. In 2012, 78 percent of homicides in Rochester were committed with a firearm (Division of Criminal Justice Statistics Office of Research and Performance, 2013). A pulling levers intervention would likely be a great benefit to the community.


8. **Does it exist in other communities? If yes, where?**
Several communities have utilized pulling levers strategies in order to reduce firearm violence. The most notable of these are Boston (Operation Ceasefire), Minnesota, Indianapolis (IVRP), and Stockton (Operation Peacekeeper). Other cities which have used pulling levers programs which have targeted crimes other than firearms are Nashville and Rockford (Braga & Weisburg, 2012).


Many pulling levers interventions have been implemented which have produced successful results. After the highly successful results of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire in 1996, many law enforcement agencies have reproduced the pulling levers strategy with similar results.

Operation Ceasefire, Boston (1996):


Operation Peacekeeper, Stockton (1997):

Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership, Indianapolis (1999):

10. Provide a review of the research (At least two studies)
a. What was the research design
b. Describe the data
c. Summarize the findings

Operation Ceasefire in Boston is regarded as the pulling levers intervention which inspired the development of subsequent programs. The success of Operation Ceasefire has led to its replication in numerous cities. Initially called the Boston Gun Project, the program was created with a problem oriented policing framework (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Morrison Piehl, 2001). The intervention targeted youths and homicide reduction. Researchers found that firearms, especially new semiautomatic pistols, were strongly associated with gang violence. They also found that the majority of youth homicide was committed by a small number of chronic gang offenders.

Operation Ceasefire was heavily focused on attacking supply of firearms to the youths, and it also relied on a strong deterrence based message (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Morrison Piehl, 2001). Many agencies partnered to reduce gun trafficking both in Massachusetts and other states. Attacks on firearm supply included restoration of obliterated serial numbers, crime gun traces, and increased enforcement attention on gun traffickers. The deterrent element of Operation Ceasefire became known as the “pulling levers” strategy. Pulling levers or deterrence efforts included meetings with gang members and known offenders to explain that their violent behavior would not be acceptable. Law enforcement also held individual meetings with those under supervision of parole, probation, and incarceration. The offenders were told specifically the consequences that would follow if they engaged in violent behavior. However, law enforcement did not target all aspects of gang activity; the offenders were told that other nonviolent crimes would be handled as usual. Only violent behaviors would result in an
intensified police response. The deterrence message focused solely on serious violence, not all aspects of illicit gang activity. In addition, community agencies such as churches, corrections officers, and other service groups offered resources to gang members in need of assistance.

When using a pre and posttest comparison, Operation Ceasefire is highly successful in reducing firearm violence (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Morrison Piehl, 2001). In the five years prior to the intervention, Boston averaged 44 youth homicides per year. In the year of the programs implementation, the number of homicides decreased to 26 and in the following year there were only 15 youth homicides. Operation Ceasefire produced a statistically significant decrease by month for youth homicides (63 percent), city wide gun assaults (25 percent), city wide shots-fired calls for service (32 percent), and youth gun assault incidents in the target area (44 percent). Comparisons to violence trends in other US cities provide weaker evidence of success, but there is reason to believe that the youth homicide reduction in Boston was unrelated to overall declining youth homicide trends. The observed decrease in violence in Boston was unlike any reduction of violence in other US cities. Not only were the declines in Boston much larger, but also they were more abrupt. More detailed research examining the situation of each comparison city is necessary in order to obtain a better understanding of how Boston’s youth homicide trends relates to other US cities.

A pulling levers program, known as the Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership (IVRP), was conducted in Indianapolis in 1998 (McGarrell, Chermak, Wilson, & Corsaro, 2006). Law enforcement identified an increase in homicides as a growing concern. They partnered with researchers to determine that a small group of
chronic offenders were responsible for the majority of these homicides. They also identified firearms as the main cause of death. With this information, they became interested in replicating Boston’s successful implementation of the pulling levers program Operation Ceasefire.

The IVRP relied on the deterrence message in order to reduce crime (McGarrell, Chermak, Wilson, & Corsaro, 2006). Meetings were held with high risk offenders to inform them of the crackdown on illegal gun carrying. These offenders included offenders on probation and parole, and IVRP officials relied on these offenders to then spread the message to their contacts and other known offenders. The message of the meetings focused on the concern that these individuals would continue to commit crime or become victims themselves. They were also informed of the strict penalties that would result from firearm related crimes. The social service aspect also was addressed. The offenders were also provided with a compilation of community resources pertaining to housing, drug programming, employment, education, mentoring, etc. The “lever-pulling” meetings took place at least once a month for over two and a half years. The combination lever pulling meetings, arrests, and prosecution demonstrated the deterrence message to offenders.

The researchers evaluated IVRP by comparing homicide rates in Indianapolis to homicide rates in six similar Midwestern US cities. Results found that only Indianapolis experienced a statistically significant reduction in homicides in the time following the pulling levers intervention was introduced. Monthly homicides in Indianapolis fell by 34.3 percent after the program was initiated. Results seem to indicate the IVRP was successful in reducing homicide; however, some threats to the validity of these results do
exist. The homicide rates prior to the pulling levers program were so excessively high, that even without an intervention, some decline in homicide may have occurred. Although, it can be argued that since the homicide rates in the five years prior to intervention were relatively unchanging, a decline may not have occurred without the intervention, or at least a decline as substantial as was experienced after the start of IVRP (McGarrell, Chermak, Wilson, & Corsaro, 2006).


11. How would you rate this program or strategy?
   a. Generally recognized as effective
   b. Good likelihood that it is effective
   c. Inconclusive
   d. Probably not effective
   e. Generally recognized as not effective
   f. Harmful or likely to be harmful

12. Explain your Rating
   Evaluations of pulling levers strategies to reduce firearm violence have produced overwhelmingly positive results. After the intervention, each city experienced statistically significant reductions in gun related violence. The repeated success of these programs has resulted in them being labeled an “evidence-based” practice.

13. One paragraph summary of the program, the findings and your recommendation.
   Pulling levers strategies to reduce firearm violence were developed from a problem oriented policing framework. A crime problem is identified and the root cause is determined. The resulting program is a response to these issues, and it relies heavily on
deterrence and community involvement. Numerous implementations of pulling levers interventions in cities across the US have proven to be successful in reducing gun violence. It is recommended that any city experiencing substantial incidents of firearm violence consider developing a pulling levers approach to firearm violence reduction.