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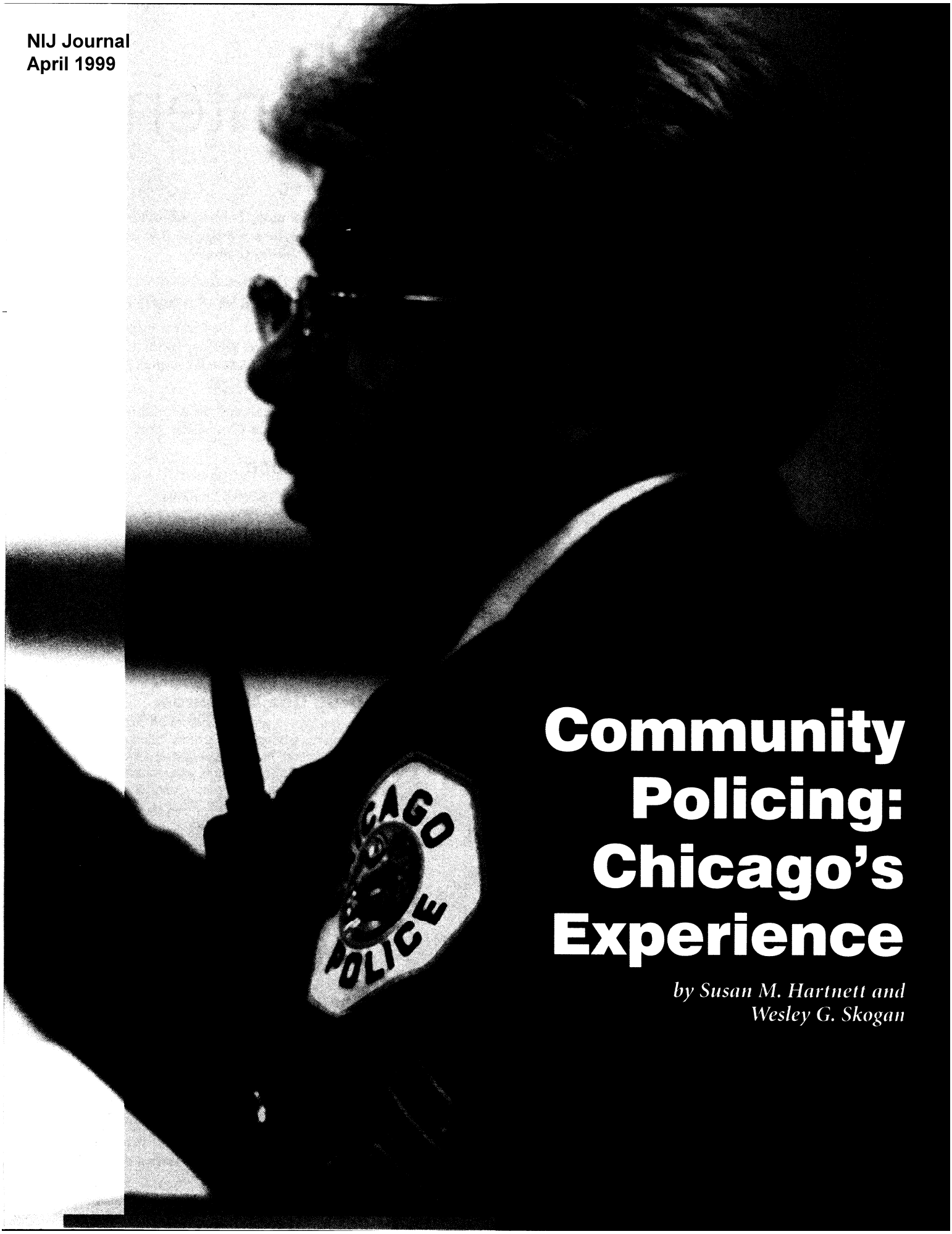

Community Policing: Chicago's Experience

by Susan M. Hartnett and Wesley G. Skogan

about the authors

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Chicago's community policing program had its origin in soaring rates of crime at the beginning of the 1990's, and in city leaders' belief that the police department could respond to crime more effectively if it could draw on Chicago's other strengths—including its well-organized neighborhoods and municipal service agencies.

From Mayor Richard M. Daley on down, the city wanted a "smarter" approach to policing—one that mobilized residents, police officers, and other city workers around a problem-solving approach that emphasized community safety and stability and responded to the varying needs of the city's diverse neighborhoods.

As the city's program of community policing evolved, it brought many people into the process of building safer neighborhoods and began to focus all their efforts on solving underlying neighborhood problems rather than simply reacting to the symptoms of these problems.

This overview of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) emphasizes the effects this program has had on both residents and police officers and the key role of municipal service agencies as partners in community policing. The program's implementation and its overall success in confronting neighborhood problems are being assessed by an evaluation team from Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research, which has a long history of program evaluation and public service.

Sergeant Ricardo Mancha (left) leads the meeting of Beat 2322 on February 4, 1999. The beat meeting, in which police and community members discuss crime and disorder problems, is the cornerstone of Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy. Photos by Peter J. Schulz.

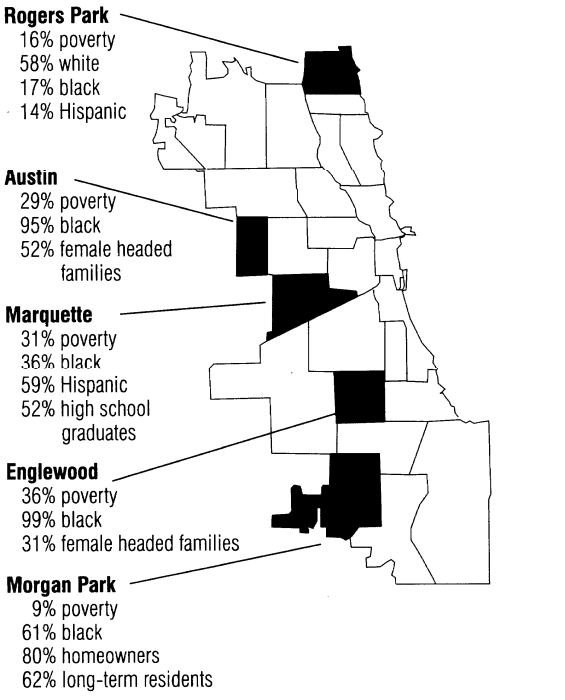
Chicago Introduced CAPS in Stages

Initiated at the highest levels of civic leadership in Chicago—the mayor and the police department—CAPS was planned for more than a year by the Chicago Police Department before it was officially instituted in April 1993 in 5 of the city's 25 police districts. During this initial experimental phase, patrol officers were permanently assigned to fixed beats and trained in problem-solving strategies. Neighborhood meetings between police and area residents were held, and citizen committees were formed to advise district commanders. City agencies were mobilized to respond to CAPS-generated requests for services.

The experimental districts, identified in exhibit 1, represented a cross-section of the city. Two—Austin and Englewood—were poor and predominately African American. Marquette was home to poor African Americans and had one of the city's largest concentrations of Latinos. Rogers Park was somewhat better off, but it was extremely diverse and had relatively few homeowners or long-term residents. The Morgan Park police district encompassed large middle-class white and African-American neighborhoods, though there were pockets of poverty at the east end of the area.

In fall 1994, elements of CAPS began to be introduced in Chicago's other districts. New administrative mechanisms for coordinating the delivery of city services with the CAPS program were introduced first, and the remainder of the districts formed civilian advisory committees. Citywide resident involvement in the program began in the spring of 1995, when monthly community meetings were held in each of Chicago's 279 police beats.

Exhibit 1: Chicago's Five Experimental Districts



CAPS Evaluation Methods

A Long-Term Process and Outcome Evaluation. Evaluators often distinguish between "process" evaluations (which examine how programs operate) and "outcome" evaluations (which gauge their effects). The CAPS evaluation team is conducting both types over a long period of time because learning how police organizations change is as important as understanding the consequences. The team is able to do both because potential stakeholders in the evaluation understood from the beginning the need for long-term research and for an indepth assessment of both process and outcome.

The evaluation involves conducting sample surveys and personal interviews, observing meetings and other events, analyzing documents, participating in ride-alongs, examining station house activities, and analyzing quantitative data on police workloads and activity.

The evaluation used a comparative, quasi-experimental approach to assess the impact of the initial program during its early, formative years, collecting quantitative data from the first five prototype areas, from a set of matched comparison areas, and from the remainder of the city before community policing was implemented citywide. The data included surveys of city residents and police officers, systematic observation to measure the quality-of-life conditions of blockfaces, and analysis of detailed crime and demographic data geographically coded by neighborhood.

When CAPS was implemented citywide, the evaluation began data collection efforts that have encompassed the entire city. Almost every year, a large sample of beat meetings are observed, and residents and officers who attend are surveyed to assess how well the discussion and outcome of the meetings fit the department's model of dynamic involvement of residents in community policing. Each spring, a large, citywide survey is conducted, and selected neighborhoods and community activists are surveyed in more depth. Evaluation staff spend a great deal of time in the field collecting data by interviewing beat officers and neighborhood activists, attending planning and training sessions, observing marches and rallies, and talking with organization leaders and community residents.

The researchers also evaluate major training programs by observing the training and surveying the police officers and civilians who are involved. There are regular contacts with a wide assortment of knowledgeable officers at all levels and occasional police surveys at roll calls.

An Interactive Evaluation. The CAPS evaluation is independent of the police department, but it is also a "hands-on" effort that provides research feedback in support of the city's effort to constantly improve the program. The evaluation generates regular formal public reports that are widely distributed and discussed. Just as important, the evaluation team members interact regularly with police and civilian stakeholders in the program. Respecting their openness and willingness to share information, research team members discuss findings regularly with stakeholders and give them an opportunity to comment in advance on all reports to ensure their factual accuracy and to provide alternative views and interpretations of events for the researchers to consider. The evaluation tries to focus on *strategic* concerns: what works and what does not, the features of projects that seem to require attention, the reasons why things are moving rapidly or slowly, and the impact of conditions or events that are outside of the department's control but affect departmental plans.

Support for the evaluation has come from the National Institute of Justice in partnership with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Chicago Community Trust.

The Evaluation Started Early

The National Institute of Justice has been sponsoring research on community policing since the early 1980's, and the evaluation team knew the concept held great promise but also knew that effecting change in a 15,000-member police organization was going to be a big job. Northwestern University's evaluation began in the fall of 1992, during the program's planning stage, so that pre-CAPS data could be collected and compared to post-CAPS data and provide "before" and "after" pictures of the program.

CAPS has broad goals. At its core lies crime prevention, but major elements of the program are directed at combating physical decay, responding to concern about social disorder, and improving relations between police and the community at the neighborhood level. The evaluation addressed all of those goals, including how the districts formulated their programs and how they involved residents in problem solving. The evaluation used surveys and direct observation to measure the program's impact on problems ranked as most important by residents. Surveys were used to gauge the impact of the program on residents' perceptions of the police and police officers' perceptions of community policing. (See "CAPS Evaluation Methods" for details of the techniques the Northwestern team is using to measure the effects of CAPS.)

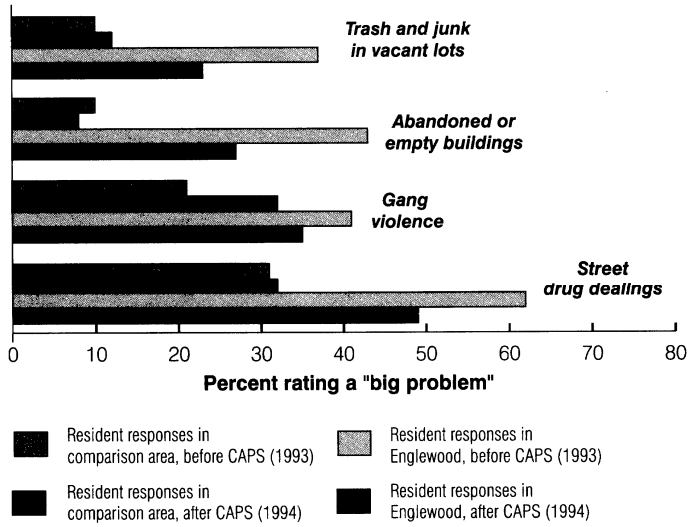
Citizens' Perceptions of Problems

Pre-CAPS surveys in the five initial experimental districts and matched comparison districts identified residents' biggest concerns and measured their satisfaction with the quality of police service. Residents were worried about a wide range of

issues. Some were common problems everywhere, but others were very localized, and every problem varied in intensity. Street drug dealing, for example, was among the top four problems in each of the five districts, but the relative importance of this problem varied by district: 60 percent or more of residents in Austin, Englewood, and Marquette rated it high on their list of problems, but 20 percent or fewer of residents in Morgan Park and Rogers Park rated it as high.

Some examples of localized problems were vandalism to parked cars (an issue in densely populated areas with little off-street parking), burglary (one of the highest ranked problems only in the most affluent of the five districts), and graffiti (typically most troubling in Latino neighborhoods).

Exhibit 2: Resident Perceptions of Neighborhood Problems, Before and After CAPS, for Englewood and a Matched Comparison Neighborhood



Effects on the Community and Citizen Perceptions

Residents play a leading role in CAPS. The model calls for the formation of problem-solving partnerships between police and citizens. Community involvement comes through several channels, but primarily through monthly beat meetings and advisory committees formed in each police district. Some of the most frequently discussed problems include graffiti, noisy neighbors, abandoned buildings, public drinking, and loitering bands of youths. These discussions, which often involve issues that transcend the traditional police mission, help police understand residents' agendas, develop priorities, and devise solutions to problems.

Both police and citizens play major roles in identifying and prioritizing problems, formulating ways of addressing them, and helping bring community resources to bear in solving them. Such involvement can be difficult to sustain in any neighborhood, but especially in poor and disenfranchised neighborhoods with a history of troubled relations with the police.

Both police and citizens play major roles in identifying and prioritizing problems formulating ways of addressing them, and helping bring community resources to bear in solving them.

Overall, the evaluation found evidence of CAPS-related success with physical decay problems in three of the five initial experimental districts, as well as a decline in gang and drug problems in two districts and a decline in major crimes in two districts. Many other positive changes were recorded in the experimental areas, but they could not be linked directly to CAPS because they could not be differentiated from trends taking place in the matched comparison areas.

The Effects in Englewood. The most notable initial effects of the program were in the Englewood district. As exhibit 2 illustrates, the

Community involvement comes primarily through the monthly beat meetings and neighborhood advisory councils in each police district. Photo by Peter J. Schulz.

four major problems identified by the community decreased during the 16-month period after CAPS was introduced, while none decreased significantly and gang violence increased a great deal in Englewood's comparison area.

Although Englewood was one of the highest crime districts in the city, residents put two physical decay problems near the top of their agenda: abandoned buildings and trash problems. At the start of the program, Englewood had more than 600 abandoned buildings, and junk and litter filled its vacant lots, streets, and alleys. Englewood's successes reflect, in part, the vigor with which residents and police were able to mobilize city services to respond to these problems. In the 16 months from April 1993 to August 1994, they generated 1,314 requests for city services to attend to abandoned buildings and 2,379 requests for clean-ups by the Department of Streets and Sanitation. Because municipal services have such a high profile in Chicago's community policing, the requests for services were answered in a timely manner. Over the next 18 months, abandonment and trash problems declined sharply compared to other matched areas, as did drug and gang violence problems. Englewood was one of the program's biggest early successes.

Today, there is still a great deal of enthusiasm for the program in Englewood. As one community activist put it, "One thing that really stands out in my mind is the block that I live on. Before CAPS, drug dealers and gang bangers had owned that block for 8 years. People didn't come out, there were no children playing. There was no grass, there were no flowers. There were no lights in the windows. There were huge rats. The alleys were filled with garbage. It looked like a dump. Enormous numbers of empty alcohol containers were everywhere. You could taste the fear. Now when you come onto the block, instead of profanity, you hear children's laughter. Instead of fights and arguments, you see grass and flowers. And instead of the noise level escalating when the sun goes down, it gets quiet. It's a nice, peaceful block."

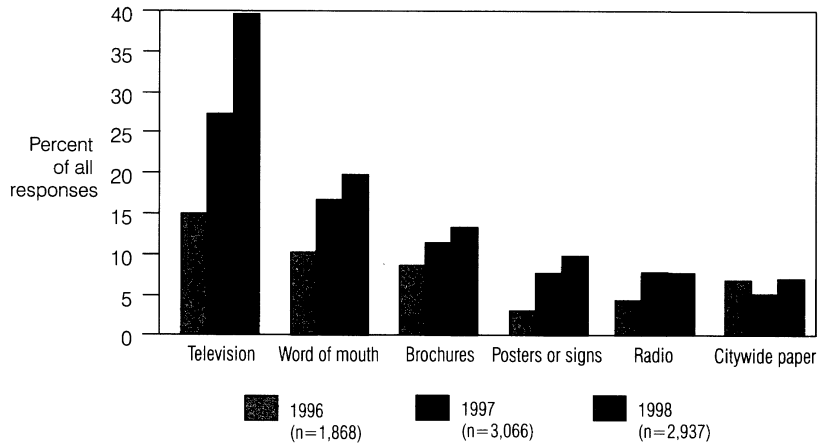
Effects Citywide. When the program expanded to encompass the entire city, the evaluation team began tracking parallel citywide measures over time. As these data accumulate, crime trends will appear more clearly, as will any changes in citizen perceptions of disorder and neighborhood decay. Meanwhile, other measures point to improving conditions in Chicago's neighborhoods. Most notably, reported crime has been declining at a steady rate. As in many cities, this decline began *before* Chicago inaugurated its community policing program, but analysis of the impact of CAPS in the five experimental districts suggests that community policing may be helping the trend along.

During the experimental period, before CAPS went citywide, one of its most significant successes was in fostering better relationships between police and residents in some of the city's poorest communities. As a result of the program, citizens reported seeing more community-oriented policing activity, and in two areas, there was a decline in perceptions of excessive aggressiveness by police. People grew more optimistic about future trends in policing in every experimental area, and satisfaction with police responsiveness to neighborhood problems went up in four of the five initial prototype districts. It also went up

in several comparison areas among people who had heard about the program. Perceptions of the quality of police service went up significantly among African Americans and whites, but not among Latinos.

Since CAPS has gone citywide, surveys of all major groups point to steady increases in satisfaction with the quality of police service. As one resident of the 10th district said recently: "You have a sense of camaraderie and cooperation between beat officers and community residents; you lose that sense of fear." His point was reiterated by a senior command staff member: "I can't see policing any other way. When I was growing up, there was a real separation between the citizens and the police. Now there's a genuine trust that's come because they know us, and they know we can effect change together."

Exhibit 3: Most Common Ways Citizens Learn about CAPS



Note: less frequent sources of awareness not depicted

Measuring Citizen Involvement and Awareness

Because of CAPS' heavy emphasis on citizen involvement, the city promotes participation through an aggressive television, radio, and print campaign that publicizes the program and encourages people to participate in beat meetings and activities sponsored by their district's advisory committee.

The campaign is working. Program awareness has increased steadily, and as of the spring of 1998, almost 80 percent of Chicagoans knew of the city's community policing effort. More than 60 percent knew that beat meetings were being held in their neighborhood, and among that group, 31 percent (and 15 percent overall) indicated that they had attended at least one meeting.

Television is the most common way that people learn about CAPS, although many Spanish-speaking residents have learned about CAPS from the radio. There is a "buzz" about the program: as exhibit 3 indicates, the second most frequent way people learn about it is by talking with other people.

Interestingly, although television is the largest source of program awareness, it does not particularly motivate people to attend meetings. Instead, the important factors driving involvement are personal contact and public awareness projects that intimately touch people's lives. Two examples of the latter: in 1998, 30 percent of those who recalled hearing about CAPS via announcements issued with report cards by the Chicago public schools subsequently attended a meeting, and 25 percent of those who heard about CAPS at their church attended at least once. A similar number—27 percent—turned out among those who heard about CAPS from a friend, neighbor, or associate. By contrast, only 14 percent of those who "connected" via television reported attending a meeting. When quizzed about how the meetings went, the vast majority of participants reported that they learned something at the meetings, that things happened in their community because of them, and that the meetings were useful for solving neighborhood problems and improving relations with police.

The CAPS outreach campaign also spread the word widely. Awareness is as high among African Americans as it is among whites, and an equal proportion of Latinos who are comfortable speaking English are aware of CAPS. Spanish-speakers remain a more problematic group for successful outreach. The city is experimenting with a variety of ways to reach more members of the Latino community. To date, they have been reached most effectively through Spanish-language television and radio announcements and programs but, again, those sources of awareness are least likely to stimulate involvement. A new city program involving community organizers is heavily targeting many areas with large Latino populations. The

Chicago Community Policing At a Glance

Chicago's community policing effort is more extensive and more organized than programs in most other jurisdictions, and it permeates the city to a greater extent than in most others. Below is an "at a glance" description of a typical, more limited program compared to Chicago's program.

Chicago's Community Policing Model

Police

- The entire patrol division is involved.
- The program is fully staffed with permanent officers on regular shifts.
- Extensive training is given to both officers and supervisors.
- All districts and all shifts are involved.
- Program activities are supervised through the regular chain of command and through standard patrol operations.

Residents

- Residents are expected to take an active role in solving problems.
- Residents are encouraged to meet with police regularly to exchange information and report on actions taken.
- Public priorities play an important role in setting beat team priorities.
- Residents receive training in Chicago's problem-solving model.

Municipal Services

- Management systems are in place to trigger a rapid response to service requests.
- Agencies are held accountable by the mayor for the effectiveness of their response.
- Community policing is the entire city's program, not the police department's program.

More Limited Community Policing Model

Police

- Small units are staffed by officers who have volunteered for a community policing assignment.
- Officers work overtime and are usually paid with temporary Federal funding.
- Officers work on evening shift only.
- Little training is provided; officers' personal motivation propels the program.
- Officers are assigned only to selected areas.
- Program activities are supervised by the chief's office or from outside the routine command structure.

Residents

- Residents are as . . be the police department's "e nd ears."
- Surveys or postc . are distributed to residents as a way of gathering information.
- Residents are called to meet occasionally, to publicize the program.
- Residents have no role in setting police priorities or operations.

Municipal Services

- Service agencies have no special responsibility to police or citizen groups.
- Service agencies believe community policing is the police department's program and should be funded by the police department's budget.

organizers are forming block clubs and problem-solving programs that involve Latinos more extensively in CAPS.

There are other differences in awareness. Homeowners are somewhat more likely to know about CAPS than are renters, and those with at least a high school diploma are more informed than those without; however, these gaps are not very large, and awareness has grown steadily among all of these groups.

Turnout at beat meetings has remained high. Based on administrative records, researchers estimate that 60,000 people attended in 1995; 61,000 in 1996; 65,000 in 1997; and more than 66,000 in 1998.

Importantly, the program has been most successful as measured by rates of involvement (which take into account the number of adults living in each beat) in African-American neighborhoods and in poor areas with high levels of violent crime.

Effects on Community Activists

The evaluation team also conducts regular surveys of community activists in every police district in the city. Community activists are more closely attuned to CAPS and more knowledgeable about the program's progress than many in the general population. Most are optimistic about how CAPS has developed. Between 1996 and 1997, activists reported improvements in most parts of the program. They are most satisfied with beat community meetings, their district commanders' efforts to implement CAPS, program marketing efforts, and the quality of service provided by beat officers.

Over time, activists reported seeing the most improvement in the deliv-

"CAPS has become the open door to just about anything in the administration of city government services. You don't need to know anybody, you don't need to be connected to anything, it's an open door. It's allowed people to get engaged who didn't have access in the past."

—Community activist, 23rd district

ery of city services, the stability and consistency with which officers are assigned to beats, and the aggressive court watch program mounted by all districts' advisory committees.

An activist in district 18 recently commented, "Communication and building partnerships are hugely different than they used to be, and that's such a big success. I'd say more people have more access to policing and city services." And another activist from the 23rd district stated, "CAPS has become the open door to just about anything in the administration of city government services. You don't need to know anybody, you don't need to be connected to anything, it's an open door. It's allowed people to get engaged who didn't have access in the past."

Activists have been less optimistic about the extent of citizen involvement in problem solving. The evaluation has documented the limited role residents have played in this area. Too many residents expect the police to solve their problems for them and too often think problems can be solved by arresting someone. Activists also report that they are dissatisfied with the extent to which patrol officers have embraced the program.

Effects on the Police Department

CAPS has had a significant effect on the daily work of the department. Thousands of officers are assigned to teams dedicated to working in small beats. The department's dispatch policy was revised to enable officers to stay in their assigned beats for the bulk of their working day. Officers representing all three shifts attend each beat community meeting, and all officers from all shifts meet regularly as a group to discuss beat priorities and how to handle them. A special supervisor—a beat team sergeant—coordinates their efforts. To staff the program adequately, Chicago hired more than 1,000 new police officers between 1993 and 1998.[1]

The Difficulties of Changing Police Work Habits. All of the city's uniformed officers and their supervisors have been trained in problem-solving strategies. Supervisors have received additional management training and attended special sessions on conducting beat meetings and mastering the program's many new elements.

Not all of this went smoothly. CAPS has challenged "business as usual" in the police department because the program involves significant change in the way work is assigned and how officers spend their time. There was initial pessimism about the idea of taking on non-crime problems, in part because officers did not understand the role that other city agencies would play in supporting them.

Officers did not want to be "pooper-scooper police," and they said so. They were concerned about how warmly they would be received at beat meetings and whether those meetings would be dominated by "loudmouths" and "squeaky wheels." Dealing with peoples' concerns sounded too much like social work, and having all of the communities' problems dumped on them sounded like too much work. As one detective graphically put it, "I'm a policeman, not a social worker. I don't have time to sit and shoot the [expletive]."

Some officers did not like the idea of civilians planning a program for them or playing a role in setting their priorities, and they really disliked the new paperwork they had to complete. Summing up the feelings of many beat team sergeants, one stated, "That's the one element that defeats its own purpose—the paperwork. They pile it on and never take it away. I'd like to be part of a task force that reduces the paperwork related to CAPS. You could type a report a day dealing with CAPS." Many were convinced (and hopeful) that CAPS would disappear after the 1995 mayoral election.

Measuring Performance. From police headquarters, it is difficult to

see the extent to which these concerns got in the way because the department lacks any measure of how well it is performing.

For management purposes, the department continues to gather and distribute the same list of activity counts as before (calls answered and arrests made), and only in early 1999 could it generate a measure of the ability of the new dispatching plan to hold teams to their beats. There are no measures of the extent to which officers are involved in problem solving and no indicators of their success. Like most cities, it has proven difficult for Chicago to develop workable performance measures that match the organization's new mission. Incentives, too, remain a problem.

This gap, of course, has caused complaints from officers. In the words of one watch commander, "Nothing has been implemented—new disciplinary procedures, efficiency ratings. Good officers get disciplined the same as bum officers. Honest mistakes are judged the same as intentional mistakes. They promised a new promotional process—we haven't seen it. It's hypocritical. They wrote it, but they don't abide by it."

Police Perceptions of CAPS. Nonetheless, support for the program has grown noticeably among rank-and-file officers. Surveys between 1993 and 1995 found that, on attitudinal scales that rate their views, officers became more optimistic about the impact of CAPS on the community and their own work, about their personal capacity to engage in problem solving, and about the viability of community-oriented policing. The city has addressed officers' concerns through training, but the most important factors helping to "bring officers on board" have been time and experience. The reorganization of patrol officers into fixed problem-solving beat teams has worked because the program was adequately staffed, the service delivery system functioned well, and citizens proved to be enormously receptive to the officers who work in their neighborhood. The program's success can also be attributed to consistent support from high-level civic leaders, including Mayor Daley, who won reelection in 1995.

The Role of City Agencies

The importance of the municipal services component of CAPS cannot be overemphasized. City agencies are critical partners in Chicago's model of neighborhood-oriented policing. New administrative systems were set up to hold the agencies accountable for delivery on this commitment, and special procedures were instituted to give priority to police requests for routine city services that have an impact on crime and public safety. At community meetings, residents often prioritize problems like graffiti and abandoned vehicles, malfunctioning streetlights and stoplights, and unsafe or abandoned buildings. The new procedures and systems have worked.

"By getting the streetlight fixed, it ups the police's credibility that they can get things done," said a former commander of one of the experimental districts, now an assistant deputy superintendent.

During the startup years of the program, the city services component paid visible dividends. The experimental districts were noticeably cleaner, and police officers and residents alike quickly realized that the administrative systems put in place to support their problem-solving efforts actually worked.

The Outlook for the Future

CAPS is in its sixth year. Many of its early organizational experiments are now routine practice, but the program continues to evolve. In 1995 and 1996, pairs of police and civilian trainers fanned out through the city, training more than 12,000 neighbors in problem solving. Both frontline supervisors and top department managers have been retrained. The city hired a cadre of community organizers in early 1998 to mobilize residents of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

New advances have been made on the technology front, including the

CAPS has now become integrated into the city's fabric, and within the police department, there is less talk of "CAPS," for in important ways, the program is not an "alternative" any longer.

development of sophisticated crime analysis and mapping capabilities for every station house. The computerized system is constantly being enhanced; the latest version now also delivers offender information and mug shots, both very popular with working officers. A 1998 survey of officers working the evening watch (from about 4 p.m. to midnight) found that 83 percent of sergeants reported using the system "very often" or "often," as do 61 percent of beat team officers.

Modern databases are now being harnessed to support problem identification and improve the department's management capacities. Beat boundaries are being redrawn to better fit the program. City attorneys sit in selected district stations to assist officers with code enforcement and other civil remedies for neighborhood problems. Responsibility for enforcing many building and licensing ordinances has been shifted out of the courts and into an administrative tribunal. The separate police agency serving the city's public housing developments is being reorganized and radically downsized, and its functions are being transferred to city police. The evaluation of these new features of the program continues.

CAPS has now become integrated into the city's fabric, and within the police department, there is less talk of "CAPS," for in important ways, the program is not an "alternative" any longer.

For More Information

Books and Articles

Skogan, Wesley G., "Community Policing in Chicago," in *Community Policing*, Geoffry Alpert and Alex Piquero, eds. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1998, 159–174.

Skogan, Wesley G., and Susan M. Hartnett, *Community Policing, Chicago Style*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Skogan, Wesley G., Susan M. Hartnett, J. Dubois, J. Comey, M. Kaiser, and J. Lovig, *On the Beat: Police and Community Problem Solving*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999.

The National Institute of Justice expects to publish more reports about CAPS during 1999. These materials will be available both in print and on the NIJ Web site.

Web Sites

National Institute of Justice: http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij

Chicago Police Department: http://www.ci.chi.il.us/CommunityPolicing

Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research: http://www.nwu.edu/IPR

Notes

1. A careful study of the Chicago Police Department's staffing needs documented how many officers the CAPS beat teams would require. The city then found the money to hire an additional 1,000 officers, even before the Crime Act of 1994 made Federal funds available to hire additional officers. In 1993, Chicago had 12,350 sworn officers; in 1998, it had 13,484.