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2. Beat meetings, responsiveness to the community, and police effectiveness in Chicago

Wesley G. Skogan

While no longer a new discussion, the question of how police can increase their effectiveness by involving the community remains an open one. Earlier eras of policing did not address it at all. The definition of 'professionalism' in the era concluding in the mid-1980s excluded incorporating 'extralegal' factors in police operations. Reformers then feared the legacy of the *previous* period, one in which the external influences that counted promoted political favoritism and corruption in the ranks and at the management level. The emergence of community policing, which was to define the tail end of the 20th century, challenged this view. Instead, police were called upon to welcome public input and even active involvement in the business of their organizations. At the most practical level, this was billed as a tactic for obtaining new, useful operational intelligence. More strategically, the formation of 'partnerships' with community groups, nonprofit agencies, and even other branches of local government, was seen as a route for increasing police effectiveness at responding to this new citizen input. Up one more level of thinking, community policing was seen as a mechanism for rebuilding police legitimacy in poor and minority communities in particular and more broadly among voters and taxpayers, who were noticing how expensive the police had become.

From the outset, an important issue was just *how* to incorporate citizen input effectively. Around the country, police have experimented with a variety of mechanisms for gathering community input and for ensuring that it actually translates into concrete action. The organizational arrangements that have emerged include conducting surveys of the public, forming headquarters or district-level citizens' advisory committees, holding regular consultations with organizations that can claim to represent particular communities, and meetings with the general public. Since no police chief wants to be seen without something she can point to and call 'community policing' when their mayor inquires, these arrangements are ubiquitous.

The best systematic source of information on what police agencies are doing is the federal Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) data series managed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Even here, however, data on which organizations are doing what is sketchy when it comes to how they deal with the community. With regard to surveys of the public, their most recent study (of activities during calendar year 2007) found 15 percent of local police departments reporting they had carried out 'a survey of citizens on crime, fear of crime, or satisfaction with the police'. Other LEMAS studies found that survey data were most commonly used to inform patrol officers, evaluate program effectiveness, prioritize problems, allocate resources, and redistrict operational boundaries. Surveys were most common in larger agencies. Only 9 percent of agencies serving cities with less than 10 000 residents had conducted a survey in the past 12 months, but that figure was 60 percent for agencies in cities above 250 000 (Reaves, 2010). The longest-running big-city survey in the United States may be that conducted by the Boston Police Department, which has been reporting figures for fear of crime and public satisfaction with police services since 1999 (www.bostonindicators.org).

The 2007 LEMAS survey found that 38 percent of agencies reported (in the words of the survey) 'partnering with citizen groups and including their feedback in the development of neighborhood or community policing strategies' (Reaves, 2010). Among cities above 250 000, more than 90 percent reported forming these kinds of partnerships. An earlier (2003) LEMAS study looked at this in more detail, and found that these community partners included school groups, business groups, advocacy organizations, faith-based and senior citizens' organizations, and youth service agencies (Hickman and Reaves, 2006). Forming advisory committees that meet with the chief of police or other top department leaders is probably a common strategy, but LEMAS has not asked about it. As an example, the Chicago police formed a committee in 2010. It involves thirty or so community, faith and business leaders, plus representatives of local foundations and universities. On the police side, the chief and his top executives attend occasional meetings of the group.

Consultations that somehow reach out to the general public could be more difficult to organize and sustain. Police chiefs certainly make public appearances of a variety of kinds, typically taking questions and entering into dialog with the audience. However, it would be hard to think of those who turned out as somehow 'representing' a community, and even harder to see how this involvement could be converted into participation in local projects, in the absence of any connections between them and without on-the-ground local leadership.

This chapter examines how one model of consultation and collaboration between police and the general public actually worked, through the lens of one city that tried it on a large scale. It focuses on 'Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy' (or 'CAPS'), a community policing initiative which became its citywide policing model in 1995. First it describes how Chicago's police organized 'beat meetings' that brought together local residents with the officers who were on patrol in their neighborhoods. There is a discussion of the issues that were raised at the meetings. Then the chapter turns to what happened as a consequence of the meetings. The meetings were intended to set the 'action agenda' for three sets of community players: involved citizens, city service agencies, and the police. However, while there was evidence that all of them played a constructive role, their involvement also raised questions among close observers of the police.

Unlike some in this book, this chapter focuses on what Jean-Paul Brodeur dubbed 'low policing' (Brodeur, 2010). This is in contrast to 'high policing', which protects the interests of government (and in practice, governors) rather than individuals or local communities. High police are empowered with special authority and routinely use advanced technologies, spies, electronic surveillance, and wide-ranging telephone and Internet tapping, to discover and weigh information. It is alleged that high policing often involves secrecy and deceit, and perhaps extralegal activity. Low policing, by contrast, is concerned with protecting the general public and maintaining community. Traditionally, almost all low policing has been reactive. Officers largely arrive on the scene because they have been called by victims, which grants police a great deal of transparency and legitimacy. Their core mission has been to make individual arrests that survive review and lead to convictions and sentences via open processes.

The public involvement that is described here did serve to backstop the traditional mission of the police, but it introduced new concerns. First, there was the question of *whose interests would be served* by this involvement. Only a fraction of beat residents would turn out for a meeting, and their priorities could be self-serving. Public involvement at least threatened to bend police priorities toward supporting some interests in the community, perhaps at the expense of others. Second, it rapidly became apparent that the problem solving model that Chicago adopted almost inevitably led to an *expansion of the police mandate*. Responding to public concern sometimes pushed them into new territory (building code enforcement, for example), and sometimes into known-to-be-risky waters. Two examples of the latter were frequently voiced demands by the public that police clear loiterers from the streets and sweep up suspected drug dealers.

1. BEAT MEETINGS IN CHICAGO

In Chicago, the primary mechanism for grassroots consultation and collaboration between police and residents is small neighborhood meetings that are held throughout the city.[1] After some experimentation in selected police districts, the meetings began on a citywide basis in January 1995. Twenty-five attendees or so is considered a good turnout, but the number of residents who show up is highly seasonal; it is highest in September and lowest in December or January, in concert with the city's weather. In a citywide survey conducted in 2003, 16 percent of Chicago households reported that someone had attended at least one beat meeting in the previous year. (We knew from experience that people think of representation as a household concept.) Through the end of 2010, beat meetings were held in almost all of the city's 270 residential beats, every month. I tracked meeting attendance over this period, and by then the police had sponsored 44 690 meetings with a total turnout of about 930 000 people. Since, there has been a reduction in their frequency. In some areas beats now meet every other month, and in others selected beats have been paired up for joint meetings. These moves were taken to limit the number of officers required to staff the meetings, in reaction to budget reductions driven by the municipal fiscal crisis of the late 2000s.

In their heyday, an average of seven police officers attended the meetings, including the beat's supervising sergeant, officers assigned to the beat who were on duty at the time, and a few beat team members working on other shifts. The latter were paid overtime – a significant expense. Since 2011, the number of officers present has shrunk to three or four, and no one is being paid overtime to attend. In addition to discussing local conditions, the meetings frequently feature presentations by police from the crime prevention unit or a gang team. The latter are often called upon to help residents interpret apparent gang graffiti and problems such as newly visible street loitering. Attendees also include representatives of city service agencies and the emergency communications center, aldermanic staff, local business owners, and activists representing area community groups.

2. WHAT DID THEY DISCUSS?

Beat meetings are perhaps the most important link between residents, police, and even some of the other agencies and institutions that are also represented there. On paper, and when officers are trained, beat meetings are described as forums for exchanging information and for identifying,

prioritizing and analyzing local problems. We learned what they actually did by sending teams of observers to sit through large samples of meetings throughout the city and record what went on. The observers were trained to complete a checklist inventory of discussion topics and who raised them at each meeting. Another observation form captured information about leadership in the meetings, notable attendees, the language employed, and how long the meetings lasted. The observers counted the number of residents, police, and prominent guests who were present. In addition to recording what went on, the observers distributed a questionnaire that enabled residents and the police officers who were present to rate the seriousness of a list of potential neighborhood problems. These observation projects were conducted on three occasions over a seven-year period; each took 15 observers or so, and lasted an entire summer. In broad strokes, the picture they painted of what went on at beat meetings was consistent over time.

A long list of concerns falling in the *social disorder* category topped the list of community concerns. In the largest observational study they were discussed in 88 percent of the beats. In this category, most concern was expressed about groups of people loitering in the streets (50 percent), followed by problems associated with alcohol and with noise. *Drug problems* were brought up in two-thirds of the beats. This included discussions of drug sales and use, drug houses, and gang involvement in the drug business. Discussion of neighborhood *physical decay* problems was also frequent; they came up at 58 percent of the meetings. Abandoned buildings were discussed in 30 percent of the beats, and there was frequent mention of graffiti, trash and junk, loose garbage and abandoned cars. *Parking and traffic* concerns were also high on the list, discussed in 57 percent of the beats. Concern about parking, speeding and reckless driving (frequently motorists ignoring stop signs) came up often. *Gang issues* and *property crimes* were each brought up about half the time. Expressions of concern about *personal crime* followed closely, at 47 percent.

Many of these concerns came up during the 'new business' part of the official agenda, but the 'old business' segment of the meetings was at least as important. It frequently included a review by police of what had been accomplished since the last meeting with regard to the problems that had previously been discussed. Mostly this consisted of reports about police activities, summaries of arrests made in the area, and discussion of prominent incidents. This is when the meetings were most contentious. Frequently discussed issues that could be reassigned to city service agencies or the traffic bureau were generally dealt with to the satisfaction of all. Rather, the flash points involved drugs and order maintenance. From their vantage point, residents 'knew' who the drug dealers and 'gang bangers'

were and who was up to no good on the street. They named names and locations, and they were disappointed (at the least) that those they had identified were still at large. They wanted to know why, alluding to indifference, incompetence and corruption. Police would sputter in response, blaming 'the judges'. Those could have been 'teachable moments' with regard to Constitutional policing, but it rarely worked out that way.

3. WHAT HAPPENED IN RESPONSE?

Beat meetings were not to be debating societies. The consultation they afford certainly is important. Responsive dialogue between police and residents at the meetings has the potential to build mutual confidence and support, and may help increase the legitimacy of police interventions. However, an important bottom line for beat meetings is whether they link consultation with effective action. As they developed, it became apparent that beat meetings had three 'active ingredients'. They fostered community problem-solving activities, they helped inject public priorities into the bureaucratic routines of city service agencies; and they put some pressure on the police to respond to the concerns of residents.

3.1 Community Action

Things happened in and around the meetings. In our 2002 beat meeting study, 3700 participants were surveyed regarding community activism. Residents were asked if they had participated in each of a list of activities during the past 12 months, in their beat or police district. Overall, 64 percent of those who attended reported participating in at least one of the projects listed. Their reported actions formed two distinct statistical clusters. The 'aggressive activism' category included participants in marches, prayer vigils, 'smoke outs', 'positive loitering' campaigns, parent school patrols, and neighborhood watch groups. Participating in marches and rallies was the most frequent activity in this category. Twelve percent reported participating in 'smoke outs, CAPS picnics or barbeques'. These events are aggressively anti-crime, for they are deliberately held in the midst of street drug markets or prostitution zones and are intended to drive both sellers and their potential customers from the area. 'Walking school buses' are parent groups that walk through a neighborhood each day to escort children safely to and from school. Participation in neighborhood watches or patrols was surprisingly popular, reported by 21 percent of those attending. Overall, 43 percent of those surveyed at their beat meeting reported being involved in at least one of these aggressive efforts.

Another cluster of activities reflected participation in less confrontational CAPS projects. These ranged from attending neighborhood assemblies to being a court advocate, working on liquor control projects and organizing neighborhood groups. Court advocacy is an official CAPS project that is sponsored by the districts' advisory committees, and more than 10 percent of those attending reported some involvement in that effort. Others reported getting involved in neighborhood assemblies and forums put together by civilian organizers working for the police department. 'Vote Dry' is the common label for efforts to close down troublesome liquor establishments in the city using a referendum process, and the civilian organizers frequently provided support and technical assistance to groups trying to use this tool. In total, 12 percent of those surveyed indicated they had been involved in Vote Dry or some other liquor control project. Overall, 53 percent of those attending beat meetings reported being involved in at least one of those CAPS activities. Another, fairly passive form of involvement was 'contacting police or elected officials about a problem'; this is frequently encouraged at beat meetings, and at 39 percent it was the most frequent activity reported in the survey.

Whose interests did the meetings and all of this activity represent? Beat meetings turned out to have interesting repre meetings would adequately reflect the concerns of poor and often disenfranchised Chicagoans, or whether they would reflect the interests of better-off, more established community members. There is a long history of public programs relying on voluntary participation ending up favoring better-educated, better-connected, already-informed, high voter-turnout groups, and beat meetings might not be an meetings would adequately reflect the concerns of poor and often disenfranchised Chicagoans, or whether they would reflect the interests of better-off, more established community members. There is a long history of public programs relying on voluntary participation ending up favoring better-educated, better-connected, already-informed, high voter-turnout groups, and beat meetings might not be an exception.

Our first question was one of sheer turnout. As the meetings developed, it became clear that there was good news and bad news regarding the head count at beat meetings. The good news was that they had their greatest success in poor, predominately African American communities where a broad range of public institutions have failed to deliver much observable benefit. The meetings there look small, but the *beats* are small because they have a lot of crime, and beat boundaries were drawn to equalize police workloads. Dividing attendance totals (which we gathered from police records and our own observations) by the adult populations of the beats revealed that attendance rates were very much higher in places that needed them. The correlation between the attendance rate and unemployment

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was +.50; it was +.58 with percent African American, +.50 with infant mortality, and −.41 with school achievement. Over the first decade of the program, the cumulative turnout rate for predominately African American beats was more than twice that for largely white beats (Skogan, 2006). The bad news is that turnout was driven by crime. Violent crime and drug problems were the strongest predictors of beat meeting attendance; the turnout rate was correlated +.58 with 911 calls to the police about drug dealing, and +.61 with the violent crime rate.

Two other questions needed answering. The first was the demographic representativeness of the meetings. Were they mostly promoting the views of better-off people? To examine this, we compared the social and economic makeup of the meetings to that of the beats in which they were situated. The data on participants came from questionnaires that were distributed at samples of beat meetings; the data on beat residents came from the Census. Comparing the two revealed that the meetings were not representative at all. We also compared the neighborhood *priorities* expressed by beat meeting participants in their surveys with the results of general surveys of beat residents (there is more on these surveys later). We called this interest representativeness. We found, not surprisingly, that meeting participants were *more concerned* about problems than were the residents of their beat; they gave them higher rankings than did their neighbors, and this almost certainly was one of the reasons why they were at the meetings. However, we also found that those who came to the meetings *broadly represented* the views of beat residents, when we compared the two sets of surveys.

I examined the issue of the demographic representativeness of beat meetings in another article (Skogan, 2003). In general, the meetings over-represent the most established people in the community: older residents, those who have lived there a long time, the better educated, and home-owners. The extent of this misrepresentation could be striking. For example, in beats where about 30 percent of residents were home-owners, about 70 percent of those who attended the meetings owned their home. The gap was about the same when it came to having a college degree, and around the city college graduates were a majority of those attending, at about 70 percent of the meetings. Seniors attended at about double their numbers in the beat, and women were the majority, at 75 percent of meetings.

However, it is also important that beat meetings represent the interests of residents. Even a small meeting of establishment types can do this, if those who attend faithfully articulate the concerns of their neighbors. To look at this, we calculated the priority ratings given to a list of problems by residents attending the meetings. These could be compared to similar

ratings given by a large sample of randomly selected Chicagoans, once they had been linked to their beat of residence. In general, the correspondence between 'constituents' and their 'representatives' was mixed, but in the right direction. There was very strong convergence between their views with regard to visible and enduring problems. The correlation between activists' ratings of the seriousness of gang and drug problems and those expressed by their neighbors was +.80, when they were aggregated to the beat level; for an index of physical decay problems (graffiti, abandoned buildings) it was +.72. As we have seen, these issues were commonly raised at the meetings, and by-and-large those who attended reflected the concerns of their neighbors pretty accurately. The correlation for concern about street crime was +.48. In the case of street crime, it was the over-representation of senior citizens that mattered, for they were less concerned about it than were their younger – but less numerous – co-participants. There was also an only-middling correspondence between participants and their neighbors when it came to their views of the police. It is clear that beat meetings disproportionately drew supporters of the police, while those who were skeptical tended to stay away.

Was any of this effective? Later we will review several strands of evidence regarding the effectiveness of beat meetings and the problem-solving that they were to facilitate. But we also asked those who attended what they thought, and found many thought beat meetings were worthwhile. Our last citywide survey asked respondents who had attended if they had 'seen any positive changes in their neighborhood due to things that went on in the meetings?' About 60 percent of attendees reported that they had. They split down the middle on a follow-up question regarding the usefulness of the meetings 'for finding solutions to problems'.

3.2 Targeted City Services

Better coordinating the delivery of city services so that they responded to concerns articulated through beat meetings was an integral part of community policing in Chicago. This was because CAPS' planners knew that effectively responding to community concerns would inevitably involve an expansion of the police mandate to include a broad range of issues that previously did not concern them. As we have seen, residents attending the meetings voiced concern about all manner of problems, and often the issues that police traditionally are organized to tackle were fairly low on their list. People rose to complain about garbage strewn alleys, graffiti on garage doors, and landlords renting to threatening-looking people. More meetings featured discussions of abandoned buildings than of gang violence or burglary. The leaders of Chicago's program knew that if officers'

response to community concerns was 'but that's not a police matter', many residents would not show up for the next meeting. They had to have a positive response available. Belief in the 'broken windows' theory of crime was another force pushing the expansion of the police mandate. The city's leaders believed that crime is rooted in neighborhood deterioration, and that it was necessary to address criminogenic conditions as well as criminal behavior. As the chief of police put it, in an important document describing the city's vision for community policing:

> . . . CAPS recognizes that graffiti, abandoned vehicles and buildings, malfunctioning street lights and other signs of neighborhood disorder do have an adverse effect on both crime and the public's fear of crime. By addressing these relatively minor problems early on, police and other government agencies can prevent them from becoming more serious and widespread crime problems. (Chicago Police Department, 1996, p. 2)

An important difference between Chicago's program and policing policies based on 'broken windows' in some cities is that in Chicago the focus was on fixing the windows. From the outset, residents attending a beat meeting could identify problems that the officers present then routed through the city's bureaucracy for quick action. Downtown, these service requests were prioritized, given an identification number, entered into a computerized case tracking system and sent to the proper agency for action. By the early 2000s, service requests were entered directly into the city's service tracking system using computers located in police district stations, and officers could print out service request status reports for distribution at beat meetings.

In the case of services, a potential question was again that of the distribution of potential benefit. Would better organized, better off, perhaps more articulate and better informed residents be more successful in steering services in their own direction? We found that, during the first decade, its service-delivery component was one of the most successful elements of Chicago's community policing program. Many districts made effective use of the new service delivery emphasis to target community concerns identified at the meetings. Our evaluation found that, in districts where building abandonment, graffiti, and accumulating trash were ranked among the most serious problems, these problems declined substantially in comparison to trends in matched comparison areas.

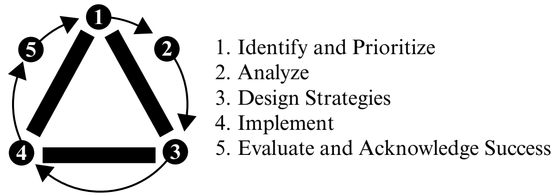
For a closer look, we examined the link between public concern, the priorities of residents who attended beat meetings, and the delivery of services, at the beat level. We found that there was a great deal of consistency between public priorities and the priorities of the city's service delivery agencies. Public concern was measured using large sample surveys.

Residents were questioned about the extent of a list of potential neighborhood problems in their area. The results could be aggregated to produce useful opinion data for 220 beats. We could then compare the public's priorities with service delivery rates for key agencies. For example, service data were extracted from the administrative databases of the city's streets and sanitation department. There we counted the number of abandoned cars that were towed away and the number of times the agency sent cleanup crews to paint over or blast away graffiti. There certainly was a lot of activity. In the two-year time frame for this study there were almost 180 000 graffiti site clean-ups and 83 000 car tows, and the average beat was cleaned 646 times and 225 cars were towed away. Combined with Census population data, we could calculate service delivery rates for each police beat. In this case, the correlation between public concern about graffiti – measured by surveys – and the subsequent graffiti cleanup rate was +.58; for abandoned cars, the correlation between concern about the problem and the abandoned car tow rate was +.48.

We also found that the priorities of residents attending their beat's meetings were consistent with problem solving by city agencies. As I noted above, we surveyed meeting participants during our observation projects, and the results could also be aggregated to produce beat-level profiles of the concerns of attendees. Correlations between these activists' concerns and agency activity were similarly strong: +.57 for graffiti and +.52 for car tows. In a multivariate statistical analysis, both the public's and activists' priorities were independently linked to service delivery rates. In addition, service delivery was also more intensive in beats that were highly mobilized around CAPS. Controlling for other factors, there was a substantial correlation between the beat meeting turnout rate (attendees per 1000 population) and the delivery of services. All of these findings are consistent with a 'squeaky wheel gets greased' model of how CAPS was supposed to work.

3.3 Police Problem Solving

The third action arm of the meetings was the team of officers and their sergeant who were assigned to the area on a long-term basis. In Chicago's community policing model, they were to work with residents to identify, prioritize, and respond to 'chronic' neighborhood problems. These were defined as recurring outbreaks of specific crimes or disorders that had proved to be resistant to routine police pressure. Because the troops in the field had to actually implement this scheme, beginning in the winter of 1995 Chicago embarked on a massive training effort. First, all officers serving in the city's 25 police districts were trained in this new way of



Source: Chicago Police Department.

Figure 2.1 Problem solving training poster

thinking. Two-day problem-solving training sessions were offered around the clock, six days a week, for months, in order to accomplish this. (The city's training and the problem solving model is described in detail in Skogan et al. (1999).)

Figure 2.1 reproduces a poster that was frequently used in training sessions. It summarizes the 'five steps to problems solving' that everyone learned about in detail. Because the department needed to keep track of what was being done in the field, district beat officers were trained to complete a 'beat plan', which actually was a form that documented the nature of their targeted problems and what they were doing about them. It followed closely the five steps illustrated in Figure 2.1. Each beat team was expected to identify and work on two or three priority problems. These were selected based on their experience in the area, crime analysis, and discussions with residents. To examine what police were doing and whether they were being effective, we sampled their action plans and followed up on what they had done. The study focused on the most commonly identified priority beat problems. We assembled a variety of data to (a) reconstruct what actions police and residents were taking at each site, and (b) assess the success of their problem-solving efforts.

In this project, one sample of plans had prioritized drug and gang problems (the two go together). The specific issues that were identified in these plans included street drug markets, drug houses, gang involvement in drug sales, and gang violence precipitated by the drug business. A sample of property crime plans included beats that prioritized break-ins of autos, house burglary, garage burglary, and auto theft. In the social disorder category we randomly selected beats that decided to focus on public drinking, noise, prostitution, teenage disturbances, irresponsible liquor establishments, disruption around schools, panhandling, gambling and

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homelessness. In all, we sampled problems from 82 beats for the follow-up study, from a universe of 625 beat plans.

What police and residents did about these problems, and the outcomes of their problem solving efforts were assessed in three ways: on-site observations, interviews with informed police and residents, and statistical analyses of time-series data on 911 calls from the public and recorded crime. The observations and interviews generated quantitative and qualitative data on the problems and activities, while pre-post changes in crime opened a window on the effectiveness of their actions.

At the bottom line we found that 'the glass' was about 'half full'. Success in solving problems took a variety of forms. Targeted problems could decline in a study beat that had identified them as a priority, but not decline in matched comparison beats (each study beat had several matched comparisons, which we combined together). But we also judged a team's project to be successful if the targeted problem in their area did not go up, while it did rise elsewhere, in similar places. Or, crime could decline in both areas, but drop significantly more in the study area. There were other possible permutations of outcomes as well, and in addition a change in crime could be either gradual or abrupt (which is a statistical conclusion). The statistical analysis also had to account for seasonality (crime goes up and down with the temperature in Chicago) and several technical issues. In the end, we concluded that the problem-solving interventions we were examining were successful half of the time. It depended on the measure. For example, when trends in drug-and-gang problems were based on 911 calls, they were successful 62 percent of the time, but only 40 percent when measured using comparative arrest totals. Recorded house and garage burglaries pointed to a success in 56 percent of the beats where they were targeted. On the other hand, the beat teams were very unsuccessful at alleviating 911 complaints about prostitution (22 percent of those identified problems were successfully resolved, based on our statistical standard). Most of the changes we observed were gradual rather than rapid, suggesting (not surprisingly) that it takes time for policing interventions to take effect. We followed the interventions for as long as two years after they began, and quite a few of the changes in crime or 911 calls we initially identified as successful proved to be persistent as well.

4. DISCUSSION

This chapter reports that the consultative structure created by Chicago's beat meetings to a significant extent translated residents' priorities into action by the city. While only a small fraction of city residents attended

beat meetings in order to discuss their priorities with the police, those who showed up broadly represented the crime and disorder concerns of their immediate neighbors. The demographic imbalance that was apparent at the meetings did not translate into a skewed view of beat priorities, although people who were skeptical about the police seemed to stay away from the meetings. The meetings did the best job of representing the community when it came to their area's most visible problems: physical decay, drug and gang problems. They were somewhat less effective at representing their neighbor's views of crime, due in part to the fact that the older residents who disproportionately attend are less likely to be worried about crime per se. Turnout was strong in the city's poorest areas, albeit because it was driven by violent crime.

A central feature of Chicago's community policing effort from the beginning was an aggressive effort to reorganize bureaucratic routines in order to make the delivery of city services more consistent with public priorities. In turn, we found strong correlations (.48 to .58) between residents' priorities and the actual delivery of services. By this measure, residents' needs were being met. In addition, service delivery was independently aligned with the priorities of the activists who attended the meetings, plus beats with strong turnouts also were better served. In surveys, we also found that residents of districts which prioritized service-related problems often reported improvements in the targeted conditions when we interviewed them again later.

Finally, during the period when they were trying them out, police did follow through on the beat priorities that they identified in their plans. Being successful 'about half' the time was actually seen as a success. Recall that the teams were to identify 'chronic' crime and disorder problems, ones that had theretofore eluded solution and were continuing to show up in victims' reports, 911 complaints over the phone, and in discussions at beat meetings. In my experience, half was not bad.

Did this win the police any supporters? Over the decade-plus that I tracked public confidence, Chicagoans grew more positive about the quality of service being delivered in their neighborhoods. Growing numbers saw police being more effective at responding to community concerns (this view almost doubled in frequency among African Americans and Latinos), and they thought police were doing a better job preventing crime and keeping order in their neighborhoods. Fear of crime also dropped a lot, and we know that fear is in significant degree alleviated by confidence in the police. In the early years of the program we were able to experiment with the test districts that were chosen to develop the program, and there was evidence from this as well that the public noticed improvements in the effectiveness and responsiveness of the police.

Others have noticed this innovation and have paid some attention to evidence regarding its success. Beat meetings have become a 'policy export'. They long have been one of the most striking features of Chicago's community policing effort, and law enforcement agencies around the world have sent representatives to see how they work. In the mid-2000s I frequently encountered officers from London's Metropolitan Police attending beat meetings and other community events. They were originally discussed in Britain by the then-incumbent Labour Party, but in a surprising turn in 2010, the new Conservative government announced that beat meetings (adopting the Chicago term) are the future in Britain. The chief minister responsible for policing noted that:

> neighbourhood policing teams . . . [would be] having regular beat meetings at times and in places that are widely advertised, but also that they are taking an innovative approach to making the most of these meetings and other ways of engaging the full range of members of the public in diverse communities. (Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2010, p. 15)

From government's perspective, beat meetings are seen as a mechanism for advancing transparency and democratic accountability. The minister's manifesto stated:

> Our plans will make the police more accountable, accessible and transparent to the public and therefore make our communities safer. Regular beat meetings will allow people to challenge the police's performance and accessible 'street level' crime data will shine a light on local crime trends and concerns. (Secretary of State for the Home Department, 2010, p. 3)

Likewise, the Conservative party's policy website ('Where We Stand') boasts of its accomplishments in 'increasing accountability in policing'. There they note they have 'required police forces to hold regular "beat meetings" so that residents can hold them to account' (http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Crime.aspx; accessed11/20/2013). This was Chicago's experience, and it will be interesting to follow the exportability of this home-grown program to other locales.

NOTE

1. More detail on the origins and organization of beat meetings can be found in Skogan and Hartnett (1997); there is an extended discussion of who attended the meetings in Skogan (2006).

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