ON THE BEAT

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Police and Community Problem Solving
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To Arnold Mireles
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Introduction

For several months neighbors had been flocking to their local police-community meeting to complain about unsavory goings-on at a nearby residential hotel. Although what was actually going on inside the facility was a subject of speculation and rumor, neighborhood residents could observe prostitutes soliciting passers-by on the street and leading customers to the hotel. As drug dealers plied their trade just outside, gang members were entering and leaving the premises around the clock. The scene was so objectionable that the principal of the Catholic school across the street had to move a classroom of students to the back part of the building so they would not be exposed to the commotion.

Officers assigned to the area decided to run a computer check of arrests made at and around the hotel, and they contacted the city’s emergency dispatch facility to obtain numbers on calls for service to that address. Not too surprisingly, there had been a lot of both. Armed with the data, the officers came to the subsequent meeting prepared to brainstorm with community members about appropriate strategies for attacking this problem. By the end of the meeting, the combined forces of the beat—police officers and neighborhood residents—were mobilized to launch a multi-pronged attack on the hotel.

With help from the districts neighborhood relations officers, community members tracked down the name of the hotel owner and arranged for a hearing at the city’s licensing commissioner’s office. They took pictures to document the complaints they would be airing there. To augment their increased patrolling activities, beat officers contacted the city’s Department of Buildings to request inspections of the premises, and they filled out city service request forms to have municipal crews replace burned out streetlights and repair the curbs and sidewalks.
The numerous violations uncovered at the inspections—ranging from code violations to missing alarms on fire escape doors to garbage piled up in the alley—were revealed at the hearing, which was attended by 40 beat residents acting as court advocates. They traveled there together on a bus provided by another city department. The hotel owner was given a list of items he needed to address in order to retain his license, and he was ordered to spend each day of the ensuing month on the hotel’s premises.

This is an example of problem-solving policing in action. In 1993, the Chicago Police Department adopted this new strategy, first on an experimental basis and later as a citywide program. The plan was to involve officers in problem solving as part of a realignment of the entire organization toward more community-oriented policing. It was a big commitment. With more than 13,000 employees, Chicago’s police department was the second largest in the United States. It served almost three million people and was responsible for responding to calls over a 225 square mile area.

A great deal has been written about problem solving. There are extensive reviews of a few early problem-solving projects (Moore, 1992; Goldstein, 1990) and textbooks for interested practitioners in the police field (Peak and Glensor, 1996). Leadership training sessions at Harvard University produced a prominent series of reports for chief executives that touch on problem solving (Moore and Trojanowicz, 1988). Federal agencies charged with promoting innovation in policing have issued manifestos on the topic and sponsored symposiums to promote its visibility (Goldstein, 1993). However, while problem solving is a widely discussed policing strategy, descriptions of the theory greatly outnumber analyses of actual practice. This book devotes some attention to what others have said, and each of the chapters places Chicago’s experience in the context of developments around the country. But its main focus is on how one city actually tried to formulate and implement problem solving as part of a thoroughgoing change in its style of policing. We sat in on meetings while the program was being planned and observed while officers and neighborhood residents were trained. We then went into the field to see how effectively the program was implemented and how well it met the needs of Chicago’s diverse communities. What we found was mixed, as befits a huge city and a large organization struggling to change. This led us to ask why the program worked better in some places than others and to recommend more things that police departments could do to speed organizational change.

There were important differences between Chicago’s effort and problem solving in many other cities—differences that will be highlighted as we move along. The most fundamental such difference was that the program did not belong solely to the police department. From the beginning the project featured extensive resident involvement in all aspects of problem solving. Police and
residents were to be partners in some activities, but residents were expected to take responsibility for solving other problems on their own. They were also to play a significant role in identifying and setting priorities among the problems the police worked on. Another important difference was that the program was not just focused on crime. All of the city’s service agencies were to be involved, and police and residents were charged with responding to a wide range of neighborhood concerns. Finally, in some police agencies problem solving is the job of a special unit with intensive training and access to special resources, and often it focuses solely on needy neighborhoods. In Chicago, problem solving was supposed to be everyone’s job, beginning with all of the uniformed officers serving in all of the city’s neighborhoods.

Problem Solving and Policing

What is a problem? Problems are persistent concentrations of related incidents. Often problems are defined by location, when incidents cluster in small areas. Later in this chapter we will describe these as “hot spots,” and the clustering of street robbery around Chicago’s mass transit stations will illustrate how concentrated these can be. A chronic offender (or offenders) may also define a problem. Street crews peddling drugs can shift from corner to corner, perhaps in response to police patrols, but the marketplace ensures that they will reappear where local consumers can find them, and that individual dealers who are arrested are quickly replaced. But not all crime problems are sustained by economics; in Chapter 2 we will see how a computer analysis of his routes helped nab a man who repeatedly exposed himself in public, and his arrest solved the problem. Problems may also be defined by their victims. Regular robberies of senior citizens or welfare recipients on the way to cash their checks can define a problem, even if different people are victimized each month. A transit station toll booth that gets hit on a regular basis qualifies as well. Chapter 5 documents how a few repeatedly victimized buildings accounted for a significant fraction of the workload of Chicago’s graffiti cleanup crews, who constitute an important component of the city’s problem-solving effort. What is important, regardless of how they are defined, is that problems are not one-time events; that they are probably linked to one another because they share causes; and that focusing on persistent locations, perpetrators or victims promises to help prevent more from occurring. Where cities vary is in the extent to which problems that transcend the traditional categories defining “serious crime” are candidates for consideration when it comes to deciding which ones to address.

Problem solving represents an evolution from (some would say “revolution against”) the dominant model of policing in America, which is incident driven.
The standard model is reactive. Uniformed officers are assigned to wait (by driving around on “preventive patrol”) until they are dispatched in response to calls coming through the 911 system. Those incidents are the units of work for which individual officers, and the organization as a whole, are accountable. Their principal goal—and measure of their performance—is to make arrests, so the immediate question police have about each incident is “Who did it?” But since the usual answer is “Nobody knows!” (relatively few crimes actually get solved on the spot), mostly they fulfill their responsibility by filling out a form. The type of crimes that interest police are problems addressed only by this model, and their goal—crime prevention—is accomplished by threatening arrest and punishment through saturation patrols, aggressive traffic stops and field interrogations. This incident-driven approach helped create, and now reinforces, the expectation that the job of the police is to rush to the scene after something bad happens.

**The Process for Solving Problems**

Problem solving involves new units of work—problems—and a much larger set of approaches to solving them. It also calls for a more deliberative approach to achieving the goal of preventing problems in the future. Once a problem has been identified, the textbooks prescribe a series of steps toward solving it. How they are named and numbered varies, but most describe a four-step problem-solving sequence known as the “SARA” model, named so for the initials of the four steps of the process. During the scanning stage officers identify a problem; during the analysis stage they collect and consider information about it; during the response stage they work along with others to develop and implement solutions to it; and during the assessment stage they evaluate how well all of this worked.

**Scanning** This first step in SARA results in identification of a set of priority problems. Where do the problems come from? Departments everywhere rely first on the skill of their officers to recognize problems. Because this is a conceptual issue calling for new ways of thinking as well as possible departures from past practices, officer training is important. Departments vary in how much support they provide. In some places computerized databases of calls for service, crime analysis and user-friendly maps are being used to inform officers working the street. Data collected by other city agencies might identify problems, and certainly anything that the newspapers make a fuss about will be considered carefully. As we shall see in Chapter 3, Chicago also sponsored monthly public meetings at which residents discussed local problems with police. The officers who were present had a form on which they were to
summarize the issues that came up, and their sergeant was responsible for prioritizing these issues in a formal action plan for the beat.

Because numerous problems often surface, it is important to set priorities among them. This can involve weighing their seriousness against their frequency, for often the two go in opposite directions. Other key factors include how many households are affected by a problem and the ease with which victims recover from the experience. One criterion that must play an important role in sifting through problems is realism about just what problem solving can accomplish. Caps on resources and limits to the legal powers of municipalities mean that society’s most fundamental problems probably are out of bounds. What Kenneth Peak and Ronald Glensor (1996) call “small wins” often will seem more realistic and optimally will accumulate to larger victories over time. Both the problems that are identified at this stage and their priorities are always provisional, for further analysis will often reveal implications that will change their relative weighting, perhaps leading participants to redefine the nature of the problems themselves.

Analysis. This is the point at which a diagnosis of the problem is developed. Traditionally analysis involved nothing more than identifying suspects. Now it requires learning as much as possible about a problem, using information ranging from calls for service to interviews, observations and data from other city agencies. At its best, analysis looks beyond the symptoms and into the causes of the problem. Getting officers to actually do problem analysis is perhaps the most difficult part of the process. Because it sounds time consuming and gets in the way of getting something done, officers have to be convinced that problem solving is worthwhile. It helps to have a framework to organize what they glean. In Newport News, Virginia, the team of officers that developed the city’s problem-solving program drew up a list of specific questions that were to be addressed while analyzing a problem. These asked for details about the victims and offenders, and about facts pertaining to the incidents and their immediate locations. For example, the list of features that need looking into included the typical sequence of events surrounding the problem, details about the setting in which it occurred and significant elements of the social context, such as the probability that any witnesses would step forward with information (Spelman and Eck, 1987). As Chapter 2 describes, Chicago trained its officers to organize what they found around a “crime triangle” linking victim, offender and locational features of the problem at hand.

Analysis can help sharpen the definition of the problem. William Spelman and John Eck (1987) report how, in one instance, the process of gathering information forced Newport News police to redefine the problem. They thought they were attacking a burglary problem but ended up recommending
that the entire housing project they were assisting be torn down, so advanced was its disintegration. Analysis can also help set realistic objectives as the depth of the problem and the resources that can be brought to bear on it become clear.

**Response.** Just as it expands the range of problems that police are likely to tackle, problem solving widens the range of tactics that they might adopt for solving them. Traditionally, their solution to a problem was to arrest someone and hope that this offender would be prosecuted and punished further down the criminal justice pipeline. Problem solving calls for a much broader repertoire of responses to priority problems. It might involve arresting someone, or referring them or the problem to another agency, or even calling for new regulations or city ordinances to stem an activity, or empowering the police to take action. It could call for new hardware, in the form of locks, bars and stronger doors. It should take a long-term view; problem solving is about preventing problems from resurfacing in the future, not just about submerging them today. It is certain that many problems will need tailor-made, customized solutions; often the package of tactics that a problem requires will not already be on the shelf. Developing these responses requires abilities that are hard to teach: creativity, flexibility, initiative and willingness to risk failure.

One thing police can do is look for help. Effective responses to a problem might involve other public institutions. The civil-justice system can loom large as a resource. This is often the best forum for dealing with irresponsible landlords or trouble-making tenants. Judges can be convinced to issue orders to responsible parties to abate “nuisances” (which can consist of owning a house where drugs are suspected of being sold), and to fine or jail those who fail to do so. A civil court will have to be involved in ordering an unsafe building to be torn down. The city’s regulatory agencies are also important. They license and inspect taverns and package liquor outlets, often a locus of neighborhood concern, and can act on complaints against merchants who do not properly dispose of their trash or maintain their buildings. The health department can be called upon to declare that an abandoned building where transients sleep is a hazard to the community. The best solutions often involve those who have a personal stake in getting the problem resolved. This often means getting the immediate community mobilized to do its part or even take responsibility for a problem.

In addition to deciding what to do, officers must also get it done. This could involve getting a community organization to adopt a problem, securing the assistance of city or private agencies or working in concert with other units within the police department. As we report in ensuing chapters, none of this cooperation happens automatically. Others do not necessarily see a beat officer’s agenda as their own, and the question of whether or not an effective
response to a problem can be mounted looms large in the response stage of problem solving. As Chapter 2 documents, Chicago chose to make implementation a separate step in its problem-solving model to highlight its importance and the distinctive skill and effort it demands.

**Assessment.** The assessment stage of SARA is another that threatens to get lost. This is the point at which participants are supposed to consider whether the effort is having any of its anticipated consequences. Problem-solvers need to assess their "outputs," or what they have done. For example, if the project involved weekly community marches to confront street drug dealers, assessment could entail counting how many people turned out and what might account for weeks of high and low turnout. They also need to assess their "outcomes," or what the consequences of their effort have been. Are the drug dealers gone? Are there fewer of them, or are they being more discreet? Are fewer customers coming by? Once the benefits are clear, it could also be instructive to compare them with the effort that was invested and question the relationship between costs and benefits.

The assessment stage often gets bypassed because it sounds hard. It is true that the further police stray from counting their activities and reported crime, much maligned by William Spelman (1988) as "bean counting," the harder it can be to assemble impact information that demonstrates that the project made a difference. However, as Mike Hough and Nick Tilley (1998) point out, modest "monitoring" efforts are probably appropriate most of the time. Monitoring involves assessing whether an initiative was well-implemented, if it seemed to do some good and whether it diverted too much attention from other important matters. Extensive and expensive evaluations probably are best left to others. Assessment also gets bypassed because the information is often little used. In an ideal world, police agencies would find ways of compiling their assessments and making use of them to benefit future problem-solving projects. Officers could tap into a bank of similar-sounding problems to find suggestions for workable and effective solutions. If there were a body of well-evaluated practice it would also not be necessary to reassess every intervention with excessive care; if we knew what worked, we could just assess program implementation. However, in actuality, American policing agencies have none of these capabilities.

Assessment also is probably avoided because unalloyed success is often elusive in the real world of problem solving. Peter Rossi’s "Iron Law of Evaluation" (discussed in Rossi and Williams, 1972) states that the more carefully we examine programs, the fewer interventions seem actually to work. However, often the stated objectives of projects are too optimistic. Eck and Spelman (1987a) proposed several criteria that illustrate how broadly success can be construed. Success might mean that the problem goes away. This is
desirable, but because problems are by definition persistent and probably have already resisted the organization’s routine efforts, eradication of the problem is a high standard. Success might be measured by a reduction in the frequency of the problem, or its manifestations may become less serious. For example, while a project may not eliminate gangs, it might stomp out their graffiti, stop them from flaunting their “colors” or recruiting new members while in school, and secure for students a safe passage home at the end of the school day. A success could be counted if victims’ concerns were handled more effectively and they were successfully steered to agencies that could provide them with further assistance. In fact, turning problems over to other agencies that are equipped to deal with issues more effectively than the police is a form of problem-solving success as well. Finally, problem-solving programs with a strong community focus value a committed and supportive citizenry, and would count the emergence or strengthening of a community group during the campaign against a problem as a victory as well; this is sometimes known as a “process success.”

How does problem solving differ from “community policing?” Community policing programs are characterized by the permanent assignment of officers to specific areas, significant decentralization of authority and responsibility in the organization, openness to the public when it comes to identifying and prioritizing issues for police to work on, willingness to form partnerships with civic associations and service-providing agencies, and adoption of a problem-solving approach to the daily work of the department. All of the elements of community policing are important, but a department cannot claim to be doing community policing without the problem-solving component. Chicago developed its problem-solving model as part of a wholesale reorganization along community-policing lines. When officers meet with neighborhood residents to discuss and prioritize issues, they cannot dismiss important concerns because “that’s not our responsibility.” No one would come to the next meeting. Officers have to confront the vital issues facing the community, if only to identify how others can take—or help take—responsibility for addressing them. Problem solving may also be the most radical component of the package. It changes the unit of work within the department from individual incidents to problems. It calls for police to adopt tactics that fall outside their standard repertoire as well as address issues that fall outside of their traditional competence. Finally, it stresses results rather than the process of policing. As is discussed later in this chapter, traditional policing stands accused of focusing on activity measures rather than on outcomes, and community policing is frequently hit as a public relations program, but police working in a problem-solving mode are spurred by the resolve that “this has to stop.”
Problem-solving projects can be organized without many of the features that accompany community policing. Mark Moore and Robert Trojanowicz (1988) argue that community policing is differentiated from problem solving by its emphasis on broad roles for the public in identifying, prioritizing and solving problems. Problem solving can be conducted without that, but then it is likely to focus narrowly on conventionally defined crime. Problem areas—locations of chronically recurring incidents—can be identified by intensive analysis of the data available through the 911 system, and resources can be deployed in response. During the 1990s, New York City police developed a command-and-control management system revolving around sophisticated crime analysis. Central databases were harnessed to statistical and computerized mapping software that enabled downtown analysts to identify crime hot spots and unexpected upward shifts in crime trends. The department’s senior executives then put relentless pressure on precinct commanders to get the numbers to fall, monitored their effectiveness and got rid of the managers who did not succeed. Public meetings concerning this strategy were public relations exercises rather than fact-finding and responsive in character. Police took the initiative, monopolized definition of the problems, supplied the expertise in developing solutions to them, held the only data about what happened closely and pointed selectively to their successes. But it was wildly popular and, for the crimes that were targeted, seemingly quite effective. Chicago’s model was different, featuring wide consultation with the community about both problems and their potential solutions, as well as a much broader view of what constituted police work. Chicago also tolerated an independent assessment of how well they were doing.

Is any of this new? When they hear about problem solving for the first time, many officers exclaim, “But that’s what good police officers have always done!” However, the implication that this is what many police officers are currently doing is certainly not accurate. It is true that good officers will work on some kind of problem some of the time, but most police activity, most of the time, is incident-driven. More important, problem solving by good officers has not traditionally been supported by their organization. Our response to this exclamation is usually a quick series of questions. Were they taught these skills in the training academy? Could they ask the dispatcher to stop assigning them 911 calls for a while so they could apply their skills to some problem? Could their successful efforts be counted and listed in the department’s annual report? Could they get an award for those efforts on Police Appreciation Day? The usual answer to all of these questions is “no,” for their problem solving was freelance work. In this study we are interested in problem solving as an organizational strategy, not a collection of individual efforts. Questions like
these test whether or not organizations have actually made a meaningful commitment to problem solving, ensuring that structures are in place to support their officers’ efforts. As Chapter 3 documents, that commitment can be an expensive one. A decision to adopt a problem-solving orientation is not one that a police department of any size should take lightly.

**Impetus for Change**

What fueled these new ideas about policing? Some of the forces pushing for change were internal to the police community. There was some interest, in a few places, in “thinking smarter” about crime. A few highly visible experiments by forward-thinking police chiefs proved to be quite influential, especially after they were publicized by the federal agencies that funded them. However, the major impetus for problem solving has been change in the social, political and economic environment within which policing operates. A list of new and difficult issues, many of which were not very tractable to traditional enforcement tactics, was drawn up for police to handle. At about the same time, community groups began to pound on station house doors asking to get involved with police on neighborhood safety issues. At first it was difficult for many police agencies to raise the money that adopting this new and potentially labor-intensive program required, but when it proved to be popular with the public, federal funds were showered on departments that promised to expand their community-oriented work.

**New Problems**

Beginning in the 1970s, police faced a series of new challenges, beginning slowly with the problem of “fear of crime.” In the 1970s, American cities felt the consequences of the flight of white families (and others who could afford it) to the suburbs. This flight was in part a reaction to mounting center-city crime, as well as to perceived declines in the quality of schools and neighborhood life. By then, fear of crime had become a familiar component of the country’s political rhetoric. For example, during the 1970s there was a flurry of media attention and political posturing over how the elderly were (apparently) imprisoned by fear of crime (Cook and Skogan, 1990). Surveys indicated that many more people were fearful of crime than actually were victimized, and that this fear undermined the quality of their lives. Even criminologists began saying that “Unless the public feels safer in proportion to its increased actual safety, the full potential of (crime control) improvements will not have been reached” (Maltz, 1972: 41).
At that moment it was unclear what the police actually could do about the fear of crime, other than somehow (but no one knew how) driving crime rates down. Several experiments were launched by a federal research agency now called the National Institute of Justice to find out what to do, and one was even formally titled “The Fear Reduction Project” (Brown and Wycoff, 1987). It examined the impact of a broad range of neighborhood police interventions, many of which later became part of the standard arsenal of community policing programs. These included the permanent assignment of teams of officers to small areas, the opening of storefront police offices, community-organizing projects, foot patrol, neighborhood newsletters and new services for victims. An evaluation of the Fear Reduction Project found evidence of a variety of police successes, especially from strategies that involved close association with the community and a focus on a broad range of neighborhood problems. On the other hand, more traditional policing in the form of intensified enforcement did not have any special effects (Skogan, 1990; Pate, Wycoff, Skogan and Sherman, 1986).

Tougher new problems emerged during the 1980s. Downtowns of many American cities became visibly populated by “street people” of ambiguous origin and vaguely threatening demeanor. “Urban campers” appeared with their cardboard tents in parks and underpasses all over the country. Many street people were apparently mentally disturbed. Where they came from and their actual numbers were subjects of considerable controversy (Rossi, 1989). Some turned to aggressive panhandling while others scrounged through dumpsters for food. They were attracted by the public facilities and relative safety of downtowns or commercial strips and transportation hubs, and gravitated toward areas where food, shelter and social services were available. This upset area residents and merchants who depended on attracting shoppers, and they demanded that something be done about it. Police inevitably were on the front line in dealing with them. Their appearance threatened to resurrect the kind of “order maintenance” policing from which the professional model of the 1960s and 1970s had tried to get away. It became apparent that a sophisticated approach to dealing with street people would require coordinated efforts by police, health workers, job counselors and housing officials; this was a problem that cities could not “arrest their way out of” (c.f., Kelling and Coles, 1997).

The range of problems on the police agenda broadened yet again with the appearance of an article in a popular magazine calling for new attention to what the authors dubbed “broken windows” (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). This article had an astonishing impact, and more than 15 years later scarcely a police officer in America is ignorant of the basic proposition it put forward. James Q. Wilson and George Kelling were concerned about the impact of “social
disorder,” a problem category that includes public gambling and drinking, prostitution, the public sale of drugs and activities like panhandling, disturbing the peace, loitering and vagrancy, which fall into ambiguous and hard-to-enforce legal categories. They found the ultimate origins of disorder in the steady disintegration of the processes by which communities traditionally maintained control of themselves: families, churches, schools, ethnic solidarity and traditional values. Where these institutions are weak, communal barriers to disorderly and criminal behavior, which include “the sense of mutual regard and the obligations of civility” (p. 279), give way. When activity on the street gets out of hand, it feeds upon itself, further eroding informal control. That the community has ceased to care or to intervene in order to right wrongs invites outside troublemakers to join unruly insiders and creates opportunities for crime. Gambling and drinking lead to robberies and fights; prostitution and drug sales attract those who prey upon the consumers of vice. Social disorder thus begets an even broader range of problems and can in short order inundate an area with serious and victimizing crime.

But perhaps the most important aspect of the “broken windows” argument is that the engine of decline it identified—visible signs that a community is slipping out of control—can take a variety of forms. Wilson and Kelling focused on the message sent by visible street disorder, but the very title of their contribution suggested that other signs of weakened social control needed to be attended to as well. The decline of informal community control can be read in violations of widely approved standards of public conduct that are not law-breaking. These include noisy neighbors, congregations of idle men and bands of youths dressed (apparently) in gang-related apparel. Their metaphor was extended by others to include visible physical decay: negligent dilapidation, abandoned buildings, broken streetlights, trash-filled vacant lots and alleys strewn with garbage and blocked by abandoned cars. It also encompassed activities that police often do not take very seriously despite their unlawful status, including graffiti, vandalism, loitering, public urination and trespassing. Albert Reiss (1985) captured the flavor of the broad array of disorderly conditions and behavior that lie near the edges of the law when he dubbed them “soft crimes.”

Ensuing research confirmed that these violations of hard and soft norms undermine the viability of neighborhoods. People who face these conditions want to move out, and families move first. House prices suffer, and so do the rents that landlords can charge. Building maintenance visibly declines as a result. Businesses follow, as they find it hard to attract customers into the area. It is harder to get residential and commercial loans in the area, and apartments and storefronts fall vacant. Those who remain withdraw and vacate the streets at dusk. Attendance at civic events drops, and support for community
organizations dwindle. These conditions also feed on themselves; as Wilson and Kelling (1982: 282) put it, “one broken window becomes many.” The appearance of visible disorder in city neighborhoods also helps explain why many more people are fearful than actually are victimized, for it independently affects levels of fear. While crime is episodic, disorder and decay may be visible on a daily basis, and ordinary people read them as signs of danger (Skogan, 1990).

The “broken windows” metaphor obviously spoke to the condition of many city neighborhoods. As Mark Moore (1998) points out, the links it drew between fixing broken windows, reducing fear and controlling serious victimizing crime helped justify focusing criminal justice resources on the precursors of crime. It was one of the factors pushing for an expansion of the scope of the police mandate to encompass the criminogenic as well as the criminal. When “broken windows” got put on the police agenda, its broad implications played havoc with definitions of just what police are responsible for. It also sparked renewed debate on the role of “order maintenance” policing in the post-professional era. Historically, police discretion was misused in many of the situations that officers are now being asked to handle flexibly, creatively and without firm guidance from the laws of criminal procedure. In the past, police frustration and racism spilled over into verbal and physical abuse and misuse of fatal force. Corruption could be found in the order maintenance domain as well, especially when liquor, gambling, drugs and other money-makers were involved. The professional, incident-focused model was one way of dealing with these issues, but now it is being shown the door.

In the background of all of this lay continued public concern over the twin “hard core” problems of the day—gangs and drugs. Reliable numbers are hard to come by, but by 1996 the country featured perhaps 31,000 gangs with 850,000 members, and three-fourths of cities with populations of 25,000 or more reported having gang problems (Howell, 1998). At the time Chicago inaugurated its problem-solving program, the city had about 130 gangs boasting 36,000 members; 19,000 of them belonged to just four of the largest gangs (Block et al., 1996; Block and Block, 1993). The city was awash with cocaine, and crack had just appeared in the local drug market in large volume. A survey of Chicagrans that we conducted in 1996 found that in their eyes crime was by far the city’s most important problem. When asked in unprompted and open-ended fashion about their neighborhood’s biggest problem, 50 percent mentioned crime. More than 25 percent indicated they were specifically concerned about drugs, and 13 percent named gang problems; “crime in general” made up most of the rest. In a follow-up question, 41 percent of those who mentioned drugs and 37 percent of those
mentioning gangs said their daily life was impacted a good deal by the problem (Skogan et al., 1996). Widespread public concern about gangs and drug crime was one of the reasons why the city adopted this new model for its police department (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).

Gangs and drugs are also problems that highlight fundamental questions about both the responsibilities and the powers of police. Pressure to “do something” about gangs and drugs can be pressure to abuse the rights of the targets of suspicion. This pressure can come from the city council, when it passes ordinances limiting assembly or speech. In Chicago, this took the form of laws intended to keep youths from standing on street corners, advertising with cries of “rocks and blows!”, the goods that are on offer to passing motorists. Other ordinances attempted to give police authority to arrest known gang members loitering in groups (two individuals or more) in a public place and to arrest non-gang affiliates who openly associated with known gang members. Some legislative moves were thwarted by the courts, but police still felt pressure from the public to intervene directly. Residents rose at community meetings, demanding that gatherings of men be pushed off their street and youths be rousted out of the park. They wanted police to make people “move along” out of their neighborhood. They wanted the pay phones on the corner ripped out. The police who were present were pushed into the role of explaining and defending their inability to do these things, producing—sometimes—an educational discussion of the limits of police power. These sessions were a reminder that police accountability to the public is matched by their accountability to the law. That they mostly manage to cope with both sets of demands is testimony to their professionalism and good judgment.

**New Players**

The 1970s also brought increased interest in the role organized residents and private community institutions can play in dealing with crime problems. Residents’ groups have always been problem-solvers. They most successfully “think globally but act locally” on issues that most concern their community. Often these relate to housing affordability and building maintenance, land use, traffic and parking, and youth problems. Sometimes their solutions to these problems involve self-help, including fix-up and clean-up campaigns or volunteer recreation programs. Groups can also find help in solving problems from government departments, and sometimes they take direct action against bad landlords, banks that will not make local mortgages and highway planners who want to drive expressways through their community. They feel directly the
impact of mounting crime on their largely home-owning constituents, who fear for the safety of their families as well as their investments.

Community institutions are fewer in number but often can bring more resources to bear on the problems that affect them. Among these organizations are merchants’ groups, condominium associations, schools and churches (which hold great importance in poor neighborhoods). Another key set of institutional actors is larger-scale organizations with significant place-based investments—hospitals, universities, manufacturing and warehousing concerns, and industrial parks. Public utilities like the telephone, gas and electric companies also are significant investors and local employers, and they conduct their daily business in neighborhoods all over the city. Finally, varied forms of “business improvement districts” are springing up all over the country. They enable associations of merchants to formally tax themselves to provide services that benefit them commonly. Many institutions are willing to spend a significant amount to keep the areas that immediately impact them clean and safe. Increasingly they have their own security personnel (there are now about three times as many private as public police in the United States), and they extend an additional envelope of security around their operations. They also have the wherewithal occasionally to lend staff and provide funding for safety projects, and to support organizations representing the nearby community when they feel this will advance their interests.

Growing interest in crime and public safety issues among all of these community players had at least three direct consequences for the development of police problem solving. First, it highlighted the fact that there are positive roles for community groups and institutions in responding to crime problems. They can do things that police cannot or should not do; in particular, they can fix their own broken windows. Funding and running youth programs, organizing anti-drug and anti-gang education efforts, and cleaning up playgrounds all fall into this category. When cities started running out of money (see below), their voluntary contributions to neighborhood safety became an attractive proposition. Second, these groups helped push crime prevention into the spotlight. While police were mostly reactive, community groups were instinctively proactive. They wanted to keep bad things from happening in the first place. Some of these prevention efforts were narrowly focused, including installing window bars and alarms. Groups organized telephone calling lists and encouraged neighbors to be alert and watch each others’ homes, or provided escorts for senior citizens. They also understood that neighborhood development and youth employment programs are crime prevention efforts as well.

Finally, these groups were interested in fostering increased collaboration between themselves and police. Some would accept police “eyes and ears”
projects that encouraged them to call 911 and give information to police. This kept residents conveniently distant and passive while feeling involved. But the proponents of active community involvement in safety issues favored working together in “partnerships”—a buzzword that would assume a major role in the development of Chicago’s program. Police were called on to help organize and support block-watch or citizen-patrol groups, to provide escorts to march with neighbors when they confronted street drug dealers and their customers, and to help build licensing cases against rowdy bars. Collaboration in projects became the watchword of the day. By the 1980s, sophisticated activists knew that the police did not have a monopoly over neighborhood safety issues. They demanded to get in on the action, and neighborhood-oriented policing provided an ideal vehicle for them. It legitimized their involvement and promised to give them a pipeline into decision making. Many mayors and police chiefs have told us that one reason they adopted community-oriented policing was that “the community just demanded it.”

**New Thinking**

Innovation in policing during the 1980s was also stimulated and informed by research that highlighted the potential utility of problem solving and by evaluations documenting how it worked among a few “early adopter” agencies. The most important concept was “situational prevention.” Developed first in Britain and then imported to the United States, situational prevention aims at reducing opportunities for crime presented by specific settings. The idea is to increase the risk associated with committing a crime, increase the effort that it takes to be successful, or decrease the value of the take. It assumes that potential offenders weigh their understanding of these costs and benefits in particular situations and that prevention programs can shift the balance in the direction of costs. This can require a sharp-eyed analysis of potential settings for crime and a willingness to redesign the environment to prevent more crime from occurring there. Risk goes up when law-abiding citizens who are ready to intervene keep an eye out for trouble. More effort is required when apartment building security systems actually work and doors are equipped with sound locks. The take goes down when businesses regularly empty their cash registers and car owners take their expensive stereos with them when they lock up. Prevention projects should be directed at highly specific and localized crimes, and solutions to them have to be tailored on the spot. Situational prevention has targeted crime problems, ranging from vandalism on mass transit to thefts from parking lots, with notable success (Clarke, 1997).

On the heals of situational prevention came the idea of “hot spots.” Hot spots are addresses, locations or small areas where victims and offenders come
together under circumstances that facilitate victimization with much greater frequency than in other parts of town. Hot spots are ripe turf for situational analysis, and their identification gave a label to something that had been at the back of researchers’ minds for some time—that police are called again and again to deal with problems at the same location. Research in Minneapolis demonstrated the power of this concept. Lawrence Sherman and others (1989) kept track of 324,000 calls to the Minneapolis police. They found that more than 50 percent of all calls came from 3.3 percent of the city’s addresses or intersections. Half the city’s robberies took place at 3 percent of its locations and rapes at 1 percent. On the other hand, nothing at all happened at 75 percent of them. The research team then isolated 110 of those concentrated hot spots and conducted randomized experiments with them. They found that doubling police presence reduced disorder in the test areas by 50 percent and led to a 13 percent reduction in crime calls (Sherman and Weisburd, 1995). Christopher Koper’s (1995) analysis of the data revealed that random 12-minute visits to hot spots produced the “most bang for the buck” in terms of preventing crime and disorder. He also found that somewhat more intensive patrolling of hot spots reduced crime when police were not there, evidence of “general” deterrence. Similar randomized experiments in controlling street drug markets found no evidence that crimes were just displaced somewhere else—an important issue for policy makers (Weisburd and Green, 1995). These studies sparked others who accumulated data on individual incidents across time and categories of crime, analyzed them as related phenomena and documented the potential power of labeling the resulting clusters as “problems” requiring focused attention.

In practice, crime analysts plot the locations of robberies of senior citizens or outbreaks of drive-by shootings, looking for spots where they cluster. That alone can be useful, especially if the incidents occur frequently enough to justify assigning officers or mobilizing area residents to watch the area carefully. However, much of the power of hot spot analysis comes from the ability to “overlay” them with maps of other features of the community to help identify why like incidents are clustered together. Richard Block and Carolyn Block (1998) studied the concentration of street robbery in two adjoining Chicago police districts that were home to several of our study neighborhoods. They found that almost 60 percent of the robberies occurred within four blocks of the area’s 10 elevated rail stations. Robberies typically did not occur inside the stations, but rather in the streets and alleys nearby, at adjacent bus stops and around the shops, bars, laundromats, check-cashing facilities and low-rent apartment buildings that clustered near the stations. Every transit station in the area was in a robbery hot spot, and 10 of the 11 hot spots identified by computer analysis included a transit station. Many had adjoining drug hot spots,
for the combination of large transient populations and the legitimacy of loitering in the area made them ideal drug-market sites as well as stalking grounds for street robbers. Chapter 5 presents a hot-spot map of another of the study areas. It illustrates how drug marketing locations were tied to a street layout that made it easy for suburb-bound customers to swing off a convenient expressway in order to make drive-by cocaine purchases.

The identification and analysis of hot spots in support of problem solving is supported by new technology that is facilitating the development of “intelligence-driven” policing. Easy-to-use software and inexpensive personal computing enables departments to move their analysis capacity to districts’ desktops. The machines are fed by the stream of up-to-date data generated at almost no extra cost by computerized call-taking and dispatching systems, which have been available to police departments of all sizes since the mid-1980s. Working police officers can easily and quickly analyze small-area crime data and make maps identifying hot spots or problem locations. By the time this evaluation got underway, most of Chicago’s officers had been trained in how to use such a system, and mapping equipment was readily available in the station houses.

Finally, the widely discussed efforts of some pioneering departments also helped put problem solving on the map. The list features Baltimore County, Maryland (which began in 1981), and Newport News, Virginia (1984). Both had outside funding, the assistance of consultants and the help of a Washington, DC think tank. Their programs were heavily publicized. Federal agencies interested in police innovation supported systematic evaluations of their problem-solving efforts and distributed the results widely. A National Institute of Justice report, for example, presented data on declines in robbery, burglary and theft that could be traced to innovative responses to downtown prostitution, the near collapse of a public-housing project and car break-ins in the parking lot of the city’s largest employer. It reported that two dozen problems had been identified in Newport News and were in the process of being examined and resolved (Spelman and Eck, 1987). The evaluators also wrote up the results for academics and other evaluators (e.g., Eck and Spelman, 1987). The police chiefs involved were featured participants at national seminars and conventions. One later became the head of a Washington, DC think tank, then chief of a larger police department. The other retired to a consultancy at a university-based police executive training institute.

Studies of the adoption of all manner of innovations ranging from new seed corn to birth control indicate that successful ones spread through the population following the demonstration of the concept by a small contingent of early innovators. Adoptions accumulate slowly at first, then the pace picks
up as a critical mass of satisfied practitioners develops and word gets around. A few laggards may never adapt; they tend to be isolated from the communication networks that link the bulk of their peers and remain tied to tradition and suspicious of outsiders. They are often resource-poor and do not feel they can risk their capital on untried ventures (Rodgers, 1995). In policing, as elsewhere, money matters.

**New Money**

Problem solving first emerged on the urban scene just as the federal government abandoned it, leaving behind a big hole in many municipal budgets. General federal revenue sharing with cities ended in 1986, and federal block grants to cities were scaled back beginning in 1987. Federal support specifically aimed at law enforcement had been in a decline since the dismantling of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and its criminal justice block grants in the early 1980s. But cities could not simply plug the gap by raising taxes. Many already felt the void created by the flight by better-off residents—black and white alike in the case of Chicago—and they faced resistance to new levies by the tax-paying voters who stayed. Increasingly, attracting and retaining businesses and jobs was a competitive game, one in which tax deals that cost cities a great deal often played a significant role. A recession hit the country in the early 1990s, taking a further toll on tax revenues. In his call for change in the Chicago Police Department, the superintendent took note of these fiscal realities:

> Chicago is faced with a widening gap between citizen demands and government resources. The resulting strains on the budgets of not only the Police Department, but also schools, parks, streets and sanitation, and other city services, only exacerbate the already dangerous conditions that are contributing to high levels of crime, disorder and fear in so many of our neighborhoods (Rodriguez, 1993: 6).

Fiscal factors pressed cities to consider carefully the cost and efficiency with which they delivered services, including policing. Hiring even more police to deal with crime problems simply was not realistic for most cities, and in some places lay-offs were more likely. In addition, many were skeptical that affordable increases in policing-as-usual could make much of a dent in crime. Advocates for community-based crime prevention seized on the urban fiscal crisis to argue that involving volunteers and community groups could provide “off-budget” solutions to problems.

Problem solving promised to be more effective by encouraging police to be smarter about what they did. However, adopting a community-oriented model
for policing is still a serious dollars-and-cents issue. Departments have to find staff to carry out the added chores. While officers walk an area passing out flyers, attend community meetings or work on problem-solving projects, someone else must respond to the 911 calls that they would otherwise handle. Unless they have a considerable amount of slack time (and it would be hard to find anyone who would risk budget rollbacks by admitting to officers having extra time) it is a mistake to assume that officers will happily shoulder the extra burden. One packet of potential savings might be found among 911 calls, and some departments tested responding more slowly or taking crime reports over the phone under selected circumstances to free up more time among officers for community work. However, this opens the effort to charges by enemies of change that public safety is being compromised, and cautious managers would prefer to find savings elsewhere. Savings might accrue from squeezing the special units that encumber the flexibility of most police agencies of any size (Sparrow, Moore and Kennedy, 1990), but those are often the domain of influential senior executives or politicians who control appointments to them, and officers who serve in these units will fight for their special status and what is often the privilege of working out of uniform. Management consultants promise to find savings by civilianizing some jobs, but it usually proves very difficult to get the force’s wily and experienced “insiders” back to working “outside” once they have secured a desirable post. In all likelihood the department’s labor contract will limit the flexibility of senior managers in reassigning personnel, and the police union may fight other changes in the status quo. After considering all of these alternatives, Chicago finally hired more than a thousand additional officers in order to staff its program adequately (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).

It is amazing that problem solving sustained the degree of interest that it did during the years in which cities were strapped for cash. Then, the federal government discovered the popularity of community-oriented policing and found a means for supporting it in a massive way. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 established a new federal office to oversee the distribution of billions of dollars to encourage police departments to do more community-oriented work. The bulk of the money went to hiring new officers, but cities could also get money by promising to hire civilians or install new technology in order to liberate officers for reassignment in the community. The federal government paid 75 percent of the salaries and benefits of these officers for the first three years. None of this affected our study in Chicago, for the city had already decided to adopt problem solving. It had determined its needs and found the money to hire more officers to staff its program. (But since it was available, Chicago did take $70 million to pay for 1,100 of the new officers.) Around the country hundreds of communities did use these funds to
increase the number of officers on the force who were assigned to neighborhood-oriented work. In October 1994 there were about 573,200 police officers in the United States; by October 1996 (the latest data available), that number had risen to 608,500. By mid-1998 the federal government had parcelled out about $3.4 billion—enough to fund (with local matching money) about 77,000 new officers. While still short of the president’s promise to “put 100,000 new police officers on the street,” it was a significant number; these officers represented a 14 percent increase in the number of uniformed police in the United States compared to 1994’s rosters. More than half of the nation’s police agencies of all sizes received some funds. The program also had its intended political benefit: it led major police groups to endorse for reelection the president who sponsored it.

So popular is the concept with politicians, city managers and the general public, that few police chiefs want to be caught not adopting some aspect of neighborhood-oriented policing. In 1997 the National Institute of Justice commissioned a survey of police departments in order to assess the spread of community policing around the country. Overall, 54 percent reported that they had adopted it, and another 28 percent were in the process of doing so. Most of the remainder considered it impractical for their community, and they were mostly small departments with only a few officers. Bigger cities (those with populations above 100,000) had all adopted neighborhood-oriented policing—half by 1991 and the other half between 1992 and 1997. This group included urban giants and places like Akron, Richmond, Mobile and Jersey City. Every one of these cities reported that it was involved in neighborhood watch programs and that their officers met with citizens in community meetings. More than 95 percent had assigned staff to serve as neighborhood or community officers for specific areas, and more than 90 percent claimed that they had transferred some command or decision-making responsibilities down to the community level. Similar numbers reported that they were using building codes and other municipal ordinances as part of problem-solving efforts, and that they were working with other city agencies. About two-thirds had formed local citizen advisory councils to provide input on department activities. Every one said that residents were working with police to identify and resolve neighborhood problems, and nearly 80 percent reported that they had trained them in how to do so (Skogan, 1998).

An important feature of the Crime Act is that federal funding for new community officers is not open-ended; it terminates after several years. Communities that choose to expand their ranks to take advantage of the money will eventually have to find a way to pick up the tab or face the always-difficult
prospect of laying off police officers. At that point these new projects will find their effectiveness and popularity tested, as cities have to once again begin making hard choices about what kinds of policing they can afford.

**Reasons for Skepticism**

While it may be a bright and popular new idea, there are reasons to be cautious about declaring problem solving the Next Thing in policing. Translating its abstract concepts into day-to-day steps that police officers in the field can follow is part of the problem. Getting them to actually follow those practical instructions is another, for the policing field is littered with the casualties of failed efforts to make change. It can also be surprisingly difficult to get community residents interested in cooperating, and other municipal departments often share their reticence. The reasons for this vary from place to place, but they add up to a daunting list of obstacles to innovation. We found every one of those obstacles at work in Chicago, where the record of implementing problem solving turned out to be decidedly mixed.

**Reluctance of the Police to Change**

As individuals and organizations, police have a remarkable ability to outlast those who try to institute change. Important aspects of police culture mitigate against many forms of it. Police resist the intrusion of civilians (who “can’t really understand”) into their business. They do not like projects that are planned by civilians, civilians determining important aspects of their work or civilians evaluating their performance. They fear that community “loud mouths” will take over as much as they fear that people will seek to use the police for private purposes or personal revenge. They are quick to dismiss police policies influenced by outsiders as “politics” and suspect that they will wither away after the next election. When the police dislike changes proposed from within, they snort that the top brass are “out of touch with the street.” They scoff at performing tasks that smack of “social work” or the “wave and smile” policing they associate with community relations programs. (And all the while they lament that the public does not lend them enough support.)

Things are not always better among their bosses. The sergeants who immediately supervise them may have only a dim understanding of problem solving, which they themselves never practiced. While the new stance of the organization may call for them to “coach” or “mentor” their officers, habits of the older, hierarchical management structure are hard to break. In that model, the role of supervisors was to watch for violations of the department rule book and levy punishments when they surfaced. Our surveys of Chicago police (discussed in Chapter 4) found that sergeants were somewhat, but not
significantly, more supportive of change than were their officers. Their (negative) views were much closer to those of the troops in the field than they were to those espoused by the top brass downtown (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). In spite of their reluctance to be enthusiastic about problem solving, the new program actually enhanced the role of sergeants, even though the program carried with it a threat to increase their workload. However, immediately above sergeants is a management layer that recent changes in policing have threatened with extinction. Managers at these levels often resist surrendering their authority to first-line supervisors. Effective problem solving requires shifting authority and responsibility downward, toward the bottom of the hierarchy. Many police agencies find they must shed layers of ranks to make decentralization work. They must also collapse the hierarchy to short circuit the labyrinthine reviews and re-reviews of decisions that provide lieutenants and captains with something to do as well as enable them to stop things from getting done.

There can also be resistance at the top. At that level labor-management issues loom large, and senior executives can be loath to loosen the strings and “empower” their employees. They have good reason to fear that increased discretion will facilitate abuse and corruption, problems which—unlike crime rates or neighborhood decline—are likely to get them fired. Many who have risen to the top under the old rules like a neat organization chart and find the fluidity of tasks and relationships required by problem solving to be evidence of its faddish character.

Officers also must understand what they are supposed to do. Problem solving calls for police to put on their thinking caps and invent or adopt tactics that they were not taught as rookies. It relies heavily on their judgment and initiative. In the absence of effective training (and supervision), it is easy for police to fall back on familiar ways of dealing with whatever problem is at hand. However, training is not very “sexy.” When there is pressure to get a program in the field quickly or cheaply it can easily get shortchanged. Without good training, police are likely to move directly from identifying problems to acting on them, bypassing the information gathering and analysis stages. All of this is even more important for the sergeants that supervise them. Neither did these sergeants learn about problem solving in the training academy, so they also need instruction and reinforcement. Chicago conducted special training programs for its officers, and even more training for sergeants, as it tried to move the organization toward problem solving.

Another significant issue is that larger departments have a great deal of difficulty in determining whether any problem solving is taking place as well as whether or not it is any good. Police officers go out into the night alone or in pairs, and they work without direct supervision. Most departments can only
keep track of their most overt activities: how many calls they answer; how fast they drive; whether they make arrests or hand out enough tickets; whether they seize a gun or contraband; how often they show up late for work; and whether they attract any formal complaints by civilians. Departments obviously track crime reports made by victims, but it is the resulting dispatches that really have to be dealt with, for they represent the largest demand on the labor pool. In short, as Herman Goldstein (1990) points out, many of the indicators that drive operational policing decisions and are used to assess officer and unit effectiveness have little to do with the *substance* of policing. They have to do with keeping everybody busy and out of trouble.

But several decades of research on policing have undermined confidence that many of these activities are closely linked to actual crime prevention. Those in the policing field know this, and it is a great source of frustration that there are few cheap and easy-to-interpret measures of the substance of policing to use in their stead. At the time this study was conducted in Chicago, there were none for measuring the extent of problems, except in the garden-variety crime category. There were no reliable and practical ways of assessing whether officers were working on any of them, no measures of the quality of their work and no indicators of their effectiveness at solving them. We saw the results of this in the inability of some committed district commanders to getting problem solving going on the street. Sergeants directly in charge had a clearer idea about what beat officers were doing, but at that level commitment to the program was spotty. In Chicago, everyone had to wait for the results of this study to find out if any problem solving was really going on. Chapter 8 returns to this issue, in light of the findings.

**Reluctance of the Community to Get Involved**

Assumptions about the community’s initial willingness to play a role in problem solving can be arrived at too casually. Police and neighborhood residents may have a history of not getting along with each other. Especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, police may be perceived as arrogant and brutal rather than as potential partners. Residents may fear that more hands-on policing could result in harassment and indiscriminate searches. It is also difficult for police to get their message out. Nothing in the past has really prepared the public for this new approach to policing, and the citizenry is unlikely to understand its goals or tactics. When they do hear the message, there may be no reason for residents to believe anything except, “here today, gone tomorrow.” In poor neighborhoods the past is too often strewn with broken promises and programs that flowered but then wilted when the funding dried up. Residents are rightly skeptical that it will ever be any different.
Residents may also have difficulty getting themselves together. Civic participation is difficult to sustain in the worst-off places. Crime and fear stimulate withdrawal from community life. Residents easily view each other with suspicion rather than with neighborliness, and this undermines their capacity to forge collective responses to local problems. Because they fear retaliation by drug dealers and neighborhood toughs, programs requiring public meetings or organized cooperation may be less successful. As a result, high-crime areas often lack the organizational infrastructure needed to get people involved. The organizations that do represent the interests of community members also may not have a track record of cooperating with police. Since their constituents often fear the police, groups representing low-income and minority areas may be more interested in monitoring police misconduct and pressing for greater police accountability to civilians than in becoming closely identified with them. And when neighborhood boundaries imposed by police departments bundle together diverse communities, suspicion and fear may divide the area along race, class and lifestyle lines. If the police deal mainly with those with whom they get along best, they will appear to be taking sides. If they become enmeshed in local divisions, the priorities they represent will be those of some in the community, but not all.

If the public is going to take any significant role in problem solving they will need educating. Civilians will not know what they can newly expect from the police, nor what they themselves can contribute to neighborhood problem-solving efforts. Sophisticated concepts and a whole new set of jargon are involved, so problem solving will require aggressive marketing before many neighborhood residents will understand the new responsibilities they are expected to adopt. In particular, they have to understand that theirs is not just a passive role and that “police-community partnerships” are a two-way street. If trained, residents will be in a much better position to make informed judgments about their priorities, be they increased assistance for victims or towing abandoned cars. Like police themselves, untrained citizens are likely to define their expectations of policing in traditional terms, expecting more patrols and arrests to solve their problems for them. Trained residents are more likely to understand how they can confront the parents of trouble-making youths, picket bad landlords, boycott merchants who refuse to clean up their alleys and use their clout to extract resources from the city for neighborhood problem-solving efforts—none of which can be done by police.

Community organizations also must be mobilized. Organizations can keep projects alive when key leaders tire or turn to other affairs. They provide a locus for identification and commitment, and they provide important social benefits for participants. This commitment and solidarity can in turn sustain the membership during tough moments or in the face of extraordinary demands.
on their time. Organizations are needed to turn people out for meetings even when the weather is bad. They also lend backers of policing change the political support that may be needed if the program founders or threatens to get off track, or if it needs protection from its opponents. Organizations are also useful for confronting diversity issues. In Chicago we observed organizations involved in problem solving struggle to build their base in parts of the police district that previously they had ignored. We saw citizens rise in community meetings to ask why minority residents of their beat were not attending and how they could encourage more to attend. Committees that represent all major factions can bring together their leaders in a forum that encourages them to identify concrete problems and solutions acceptable to all. We have seen this process take a year, because the interests represented were really conflicting ones.

Also on the plus side, one of the attractions of problem solving, like community policing, is that it promises to help heal the breach between police and the citizens they serve. It promises to be more responsive to community concerns and to find solutions other than imprisoning significant percentages of the male population. In an era of tough talk about crime aimed at voters who mostly do not have any crime problems, it promises to help and support those who do. In diverse communities it promises to be a unifying, rather than divisive, strategy. It promises that police will accommodate the public and not just the other way around. But making all of these promises come true will be a difficult task.

**Reluctance of Other Agencies to Get Involved**

As noted above, one of the implications of the expanding police mandate associated with problem solving is that police agencies frequently need help to get the job done. Police may prioritize garbage and rat infestation, but someone else is going to have to pick the refuse up and spread rodent poison. This kind of cooperation is far from automatic. Police and other agencies are divided by their bureaucracies and their organizational habits. Every agency has routine tasks and longer-term action plans that are reflected in its budget. These routines and plans have been developed on the basis of professional standards and local experience, and in response to demands by powerful politicians, so agencies are loath to bend them very far or very often. They have contingency funds for greasing the occasional squeaky wheel, but most of their work has to be rote. Their heads tend to think that policing is the police department’s responsibility and not theirs. Police represent a potential “wild card” in the bureaucratic game if they are given a place at the table. They have different agendas, and the demands the police will make will be—like much of
the work that falls into their hands—somewhat unpredictable. Service agencies will doubtless try to accommodate the police, but they will be unwilling to hand control of their operations over to them.

There can also be systemic divisions between the police and various bureaus with which they have to cooperate. In Chicago these included state and county agencies as well as city departments. State and county agencies reported to politicians with different priorities, and they were responsible to taxpayers who mostly lived outside the city. Together these state and county agencies provided the bulk of the welfare and human services that were available to city residents. But more so than with city departments, police came to them as supplicants, hoping for attention and assistance. During the course of our study, Chicago’s one modest attempt to involve a human service agency in its program stalled.

Some kinds of problems also involve particularly complex legal and bureaucratic issues. The most prominent are problems that cluster in and around buildings that are badly deteriorated or abandoned, or whose residents are a source of trouble in the vicinity. Public concern about these problems is countered by the property rights of owners, which are deeply embedded in our economic and legal systems. Civil courts are more likely than those on the criminal side to have jurisdiction over them, and they are unfamiliar terrain for police officers. Property owners may find it cost-effective to do nothing and fight back or employ devious delaying tactics and often can stall concrete action for years. Chicago’s court advocacy program, which is described in ensuing chapters, was designed to bring pressure on judges and prosecutors to speed the processing of cases and make rulings favored by local activists. Both judges and prosecutors are elected officials, and they paid attention when residents—typically senior citizens brought in by bus—made their views known to those in the courtroom.

These are formidable obstacles, and most of them operate far over the heads of working police officers. To make problem solving work, bureaucratic obstacles must be overcome by police headquarters and city hall. Problem solving takes sustained, governmentwide commitment to the program, and many cities do not succeed in developing this commitment. In other large cities, officers assigned to beat work develop lists of individual contacts in other agencies whom they feel they can call on if they really need help; sometimes they rely on relatives who work in other agencies to pull strings for them. Newcomers to the job have difficulty getting anything done. To make a formal request in some places requires the police chief to write a memo to another agency head; first it has to float up the police bureaucracy, and then down the other, before anything can get done. As we shall see in Chapter 4, Chicago police officers predicted that the coordination of city services with their
Problem-solving efforts would not work. Based on bitter experience, they expected that other agencies would continue to be as unresponsive as in the past, and they complained about that loudly. During the first months a beat officer in one district called the fire department to try to get some assistance, and he was accidently connected with the chief himself. The fire chief cut him off and called the officer’s boss in outrage over this violation of protocol. The police commander replied that if one of his officers had to talk to the fire chief it surely must have been about a very serious matter and hung up on him. (He was delighted with the officer’s initiative and told everyone the story.) But soon the mayor made his expectations about the new program forcefully clear to his agency heads; if they did not cooperate, they would lose their jobs. City hall staff members developed a management system for coordinating responses to beat officers’ service requests and monitoring how responsive the service agencies were. Service delivery turned out to be one of the most successful components of the program during its early years. One lesson from Chicago is that problem solving has to be the city’s program rather than belonging solely to the police department.

Evaluating Problem Solving

This book reports on an evaluation of how well problem-solving policing worked in Chicago. Our goal was to assess Chicago’s problem-solving program. This meant documenting the hopes (and fears) of key decision makers and the ways in which police managers went about trying to implement their vision in a large and complex organization. Chapter 2 describes in some detail the five-step problem-solving model they developed. The first step was to identify problems and set priorities among them, and in Chicago this featured a great deal of community input. Police were expected to take non-crime problems seriously, and they heard a lot about those from the public. The city’s analysis stage featured a way for officers to conceptualize problems—the crime triangle.” The triangle called for them to gather data about offenders, victims and locations of crimes. Officers were familiar with the first, but the other two sides of the triangle were largely unknown territory. Next they were to devise solutions to priority problems that might deal with the chronic nature of these problems. Officers were trained to “think outside the box” of traditional police enforcement tactics and to use new resources that had been developed to support their problem-solving efforts. They were encouraged to think about the implementation stage as one in which efforts of their various new partners needed to be coordinated, and they needed to report back to the community on their progress. To evaluate their own
effectiveness, officers were to think beyond their efforts and focus on what good they had accomplished.

Chapter 3 then explains how the organization was restructured to support problem solving. We call these the “organizational design” features that were required to make the program work. Rather than telling its officers to “just do it,” Chicago actually reorganized how police patrolled, moving away as much as possible from just responding to 911 calls and toward turf-based teams of officers charged with dealing with all of the problems in their area. They also changed the way these teams were supervised, and there was new emphasis on teamwork across the 24-hour clock. The views of the community were represented in two ways: through district-level advisory committees that were formed and whose members met regularly with commanders and by residents attending monthly public meetings held in neighborhood locations throughout the city. A new office was set up in city hall to encourage attendance and coordinate the efforts of district-level committees. Priority problems identified by neighborhood residents were to be incorporated in the formal action plans drawn up by the officers who served in each beat. They could draw upon the support of all of the city’s departments, quickly triggering services ranging from car tows to trash pickups. The neighborhood relations units in each district were beefed up to help handle the burden of all these new efforts.

Another important part of the “organizational infrastructure” supporting problem solving was training. One of the most distinctive features of Chicago’s program was that there were training programs for neighborhood residents as well as for police officers. Without this training, both groups would have fallen back on their old expectations and habits and thus could not have made very effective use of the new problem-solving resources that were created for the program. Chapter 4 describes what both groups were taught and how well the instruction was delivered. It also summarizes a number of issues that surfaced during training that would later help explain why it proved difficult to implement problem-solving policing in some areas of the city. On the police side, this included the preference of many for “the job they signed up for,” not something new and untried. Officers were dubious that, when push came to shove, the department would back them up by actually supporting problem solving and delivering on the promise of city services. They feared they would be left “to twist in the wind,” on their own, facing a skeptical and sometimes hostile community. Too many held a negative view of the community they served, and almost as many had a negative view of the organization they worked for. And they were deeply divided along race, rank, age and gender lines on all of these issues. On the resident side, indigenous organizations felt slighted when outsiders came into their community to train them for problem solving. It proved difficult to turn out enough trainees, despite the efforts of
professional community organizers to drum up attendance. However, more than 12,000 residents received at least some training, and a surprising percentage of them actually got involved in problem solving.

From this point, the focus of the book shifts from planning and preparation to how things actually went in the field. To examine how problem solving really worked, we selected 15 police beats for detailed study. They ranged in population from 3,800 to 20,900 and represented many of the conditions and styles of life that are common in Chicago. The residents of some beats were largely white, others were predominately Latino or African-American in composition, and some were extremely diverse. Some of the beats were packed with large apartment buildings, while single family homes prevailed elsewhere. Some were affluent and some were desperately poor. Our research team spent a great deal of time in each area. They observed neighborhood conditions, rode with police, examined their files, attended community meetings and interviewed community leaders. A survey was conducted of residents, and a great deal of quantitative data was collected from police and other government sources. Chapter 5 sets the stage by describing the study communities and the kinds of problems they faced. The problems varied a bit, but residents of most areas reported that drugs and gangs were at the top of the list. Latinos were distinctly concerned about gangs and poor people about the physical decay of their neighborhoods. Concern about social disorder was highest in the middle of the income distribution—above the neighborhoods that were blighted by drugs and gangs but below the best-off places, which had fewer problems of all kinds to report. The high variability and sometimes complex social meaning that residents gave to local problems was precisely the reason for Chicago's adoption of the program. Through their closer association with residents police could learn about these local concerns and act locally in response, and the organizational arrangements created to support problem solving gave them tools to deal with a broad range of problems.

Chapter 6 then examines how the communities responded. They varied greatly in their "natural" self-defensive capacity. Residents of neighborhoods were willing to exercise a great deal of informal control over local conditions, reportedly standing ready to stop graffiti, halt fights and protect the elderly from harassment. The beats varied greatly in the extent to which residents were active in block clubs, neighborhood watches or patrols, school groups and local churches. They also varied in the extent to which they could extract problem-solving resources from downtown, through residents' connections, their alderman and electoral politics. Overall, we judged that six of the 15 study areas had great capacity to deal with problems on their own. The others would need at least some help. These areas were generally poor, and many were deeply divided internally by race and class. An analysis of the problem-solving efforts
of residents who attended monthly beat meetings documents how neighborhood capacity translated into practice. In higher-capacity areas, activists came more frequently and got more heavily involved in problem solving. Interestingly, highly mobilized communities also enjoyed more representative participation; it was in low capacity places where residents from selected corners of the beat predominated.

Chapter 7 turns its sights to the police who worked in each beat. Of the 15 beats, we gave an “excellent” rating to only four. Another five were fielding reasonable programs, but two were struggling, and four got failing grades. We arrived at these grades by systematically rating five aspects of problem-solving practice ranging from the efforts of the district commanders to those of the team sergeants and beat officers. We also examined their efforts to involve the community and how well they hewed to the department’s expectation that they would develop a clear plan of action. Chapter 7 illustrates good and bad police practice in a series of descriptive profiles of the best and worst beats. Differences among them seemed to have hinged on local leadership. Where sergeants did their job, their troops kept focused on the beat’s priority problems, did some problem solving and involved the community. It is notable that we found some of the best practices in some of the poorest and most disenfranchised areas. Problem solving did not just work well in high-capacity, pro-police, racially homogeneous areas as many had feared. But this did not mean that no one was left out. At least five diverse or African-American beats did not get very good service, and a majority of those needed help.

Chapter 8 summarizes the findings and presents a discussion of possible amendments to Chicago’s program that might have helped it work better. It recommends more attention to training, leadership and performance evaluation. These are also important tools for leveraging changes in police culture, some elements of which impeded the effective implementation of the program in certain beats. The chapter also returns to the fundamental question of whether problem solving helps better-off residents get better off, or if it helps worse-off residents get better off. In addition, this final chapter addresses the implications of our findings for innovation in policing.

Some of this research could be done because we had excellent access to the police department, city hall and the other municipal agencies that were involved in the program. We were able to attend planning and staff meetings at police headquarters and interview anyone we chose out in the field. We attended some of the monthly meetings of beat team members and sessions at which the top brass critiqued action plans submitted by their district commanders. We distributed questionnaires whenever police officers gathered for training. Staff members at city hall also felt free to describe their hopes and concerns, and major city departments shared their data on service delivery.
Chicago’s program also creates many access points for the general public, and we joined them there. We sat in on the monthly public meetings held in every beat, interviewed activists in all of the study areas and attended meetings that they convened. We enjoyed the cooperation of the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety in evaluating their effort to train neighborhood residents in problem solving. We regularly briefed the major stakeholders in Chicago’s program, and they had opportunities to review our interim reports for factual accuracy. On two occasions we described progress on this project to the mayor, who was intensely interested in program implementation issues. In every instance we strove to provide strategic feedback by focusing on general patterns and our explanations for them, rather than on personalities and performance. This helped protect the confidentiality we promised to those we interviewed or observed in private settings. In briefing sessions and in our written reports we obscured the identities of individuals and communities, and until the publication of this book, even the general location of the study areas was a confidential matter.
Chicago adopted its problem-solving model because it seemed to speak to some of the major issues facing the city, including concern about crime and city life, and dissatisfaction with police service. Initial planning for the program began at the end of 1991, a year in which crime in Chicago hit a 20-year peak. The police seemed unable to cope with the wave of violence set off by the emergence of crack drug markets and attendant gang warfare for control of the city’s street corners. As noted in Chapter 1, crime was the number-one problem on people’s minds, whether they were asked about their own neighborhood or the city as a whole. Residents of all the city’s communities were concerned. When asked to rate specific issues in terms of how problematic each one was in their neighborhood, almost one-third of Chicagoans thought drugs were a big issue in their own area, and almost half of Chicago’s African-Americans were included in this group. Gang violence rated almost as high. About 17 percent of those surveyed were concerned about burglary and more than 20 percent about gang violence. But there were concerns on their mind beside serious crime. Almost as many gave social disorder and physical-decay problems a high rating. In the same survey, 25 percent thought “groups of people hanging out in corners or in the streets” were a big problem in their area, 18 percent gave graffiti the highest rating, 17 percent public drinking and 18 percent “vacant lots filled with trash and junk.” Concern about abandoned buildings and abandoned cars came next on the list. All of these percentages were higher in African-American and Latino neighborhoods and among generally less well-off people. Blacks were more likely to think that trash and junk in vacant lots was a big problem in their area (29 percent versus 9 percent among whites), and 30 percent of Latinos (contrasted to 14 percent of whites) thought that graffiti was a big problem. A
problem-solving orientation, coupled with partnerships among police and other municipal service agencies, promised to speak more effectively than could traditional enforcement strategies to the wide-ranging set of issues that were actually on people’s minds.

Chicagoans were also afraid, and that fear threatened to translate into further troubles for the city. When asked if there was a place in their neighborhood where they were afraid to go alone after dark, more than half of Chicagoans replied “yes.” About 35 percent indicated that they felt very unsafe out alone in their neighborhood at night. These fears in turn affected how they lived. Almost 40 percent reported that concern about crime very often prevented them from doing things they would like to do in their neighborhood. More (22 percent) thought that things in their neighborhood were getting worse than thought things were getting better (16 percent). A quarter were very or somewhat dissatisfied with their neighborhood as a place to live, and almost 25 percent indicated that they “definitely” or “probably” would move from the city in the following year. While research indicates that fewer people are able to move than want to (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981), that so many people wanted to leave was not welcome news in a town in which better-off residents continued to move to the suburbs when they could.

Finally, there was also a substantial degree of dissatisfaction with police service; those surveyed were particularly displeased with what they perceived as the department’s unresponsiveness to community concerns. In community forums people complained about 911 calls that went unanswered, patrol cars that did not stop when anxious citizens tried to flag them down and the inability of the police to get anything done about the abandoned cars clogging up the city’s streets and alleys. The city’s large African-American and Latino communities (almost 60 percent of the population) especially perceived the police to be apathetic. Among African-Americans, 29 percent thought police working in their neighborhood did “a poor job” (the lowest of four possible ratings) at working together with residents to solve problems, while 21 percent felt they did a poor job dealing with the problems that really concern people. About one-quarter of African-Americans and Latinos thought local police were unresponsive to community concerns. When asked to respond to the statement “Police will be open to the opinions of citizens,” 47 percent of African-Americans disagreed, as did 30 percent of Latinos. White Chicagoans were more optimistic on all counts.

It was not that traditional law enforcement tactics were in short supply. The number of arrests by Chicago police kept up with the surge in crime at the end of the 1980s with officers averaging just over 300,000 non-traffic arrests per year during the mid-1990s. The number of police did not keep up during the 1980s and early 1990s (the force was almost the same size in 1994 as it was in
1971), so these numbers were achieved by officer diligence. Police certainly arrested enough people to keep the county’s jail overflowing. Though Cook County Jail was the largest single-site jail in the United States, it never had enough bed space to keep pace with the flood of arrestees delivered to its doors. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, prisoners were jammed into their cells, and many slept on the floor. Some female prisoners had to be let out during the day because there was no room for them to move around in the crowded women’s facility (Skogan, 1995). The criminal court had to remain open for business well into the night just to deal with the drug cases that poured in. Moreover, police seized and destroyed more than 20,000 guns every year. But somehow none of this seemed to have a lasting impact on crime.

The community-policing model that the city adopted had many organizational and programmatic features, but at the core lay a commitment to problem-solving policing. This chapter outlines the model—how problem-solving policing in Chicago was intended to work. It defines “problems” and explains what police and their community partners were supposed to do about them. Chapter 3 then details how the police department was reorganized to support implementation of the problem-solving model and the mechanisms created to enable neighborhood residents to get involved. Examples of problem solving in action presented in this chapter were culled from our field work, department reports and training materials in order to illustrate the basic concepts of Chicago’s model—they help explain the program’s theory. But we also conducted research in beats around the city to assess how well the model actually worked in practice. The sometimes large gap we found between theory and practice is examined in later chapters.

What Is a Problem?

In Chicago’s model, a “problem” is not just anything that someone wants something done about. A problem is a group of related incidents or an ongoing situation that concerns a significant fraction of those who live or work in a particular area. A problem is also defined as something unlikely to disappear without an active intervention of some magnitude; problems are persistent. A final criterion is that problems are situations or clusters of incidents that can potentially be impacted by the resources that police and the community can bring to bear. In this view, a single incident, reported after the fact, is not a problem. Likewise, an officer driving to the scene rapidly in order to fill out an incident report is not a solution to a problem. Problems are chronic, have significant impact and can be expected to recur unless something is done about them. In Chicago’s problem-solving model, single incidents are viewed in
relation to how they fit together with others. When officers and area residents begin to look at incidents as part of some larger pattern, they may be able to discern how these incidents are related—perhaps because they share a common victim, location or offender. Because problem solving can be labor-intensive (“expensive” to police administrators), it is also important to stick to problems that affect a number of people. The criterion that realistic resource demands must be involved means that, by and large, society’s “root causes” of crime and disorder are also not problems suited to being tackled very often. Poverty and racism clearly impact the lives of many Chicagoans on a daily basis, but they are simply beyond the scope of the police or small bands of neighbors—or both as a group—to handle. It is important for everyone to understand their roots but, optimally, police and their partners will work to identify social service agencies or community support groups that can help ease the burden of some of the afflicted.

A final and very important identifying feature of Chicago’s model is that problems do not have to be serious criminal matters. While dealing with crime remains at the heart of the police mission, it was envisioned from the beginning that the police mandate would expand to cover a much broader range of community concerns. This was partly driven by the issues raised by community residents. As will be detailed in the next chapter, Chicago is divided into 279 small police beats, each staffed by a team of officers who meet on a regular basis with residents of the area. One item always on the meetings’ agenda is a discussion of neighborhood problems. Even before the meetings began, the program’s planners realized that those who attended would bring up a broad range of issues, and that the kinds of crime upon which traditional police work focuses would seldom be at the top of residents’ lists of priority concerns. They were also much impressed by Wilson and Kelling’s “broken windows” hypothesis and its stress on the importance of dealing with lower-level social disorder and neighborhood physical decay in order to prevent crime and alleviate fear. As a result, the responsibilities of the Chicago police came to include crimes such as graffiti and vandalism that in the past were not dealt with very seriously by the criminal justice system. Matters that previously were handled by civil courts, including a wide range of negligent landlord and building management issues, also became part of their agenda. They were pressed to take on problems that usually are not “offenses” at all, ranging from noise to people repairing their cars at the curb to the dilapidated appearance of many of the city’s modest bungalows. Police also were to become a clearinghouse for identifying a wide range of routine service needs and seeing to it that city agencies were mobilized to deal with these needs. On the other hand, their partners in the community, if they were organized at all, were
already focusing on many of these quality-of-life concerns. For the community, crime prevention was often the new agenda item.

How is this conception of policing different from the past? Consider the following depiction of traditional police work.

The dispatch center received a call reporting a shooting at a building in a decaying neighborhood. Officers dispatched to the scene came upon one man who had been shot and another running away, down the alley. The fleeing suspect was caught, questioned and arrested. The officers determined that the incident was a drug deal gone sour and wrote a case report for the detectives. Later that week the district station received a call from the principal of a nearby school. He reported that a group of students found a number of hypodermic needles around the building where the shooting had taken place. The officer sent to the scene inspected the building, which proved to be abandoned, and found the first floor littered with soiled clothing, discarded food and dozens of hypodermic needles. She determined that squatters were using the property for shelter and a place to use drugs, and wrote a case report for the detectives. At about the same time, the district’s Neighborhood Relations Office received a request from a local community group for an officer to attend their next meeting. At the gathering a number of residents complained that women they believed to be prostitutes were hanging around and conducting business in an abandoned building in the beat. The officer took note and promised that he would see to it that officers who patrolled there would “keep an eye” on the building. A month later a passerby was pulled inside the very same building and raped. Officers responded to a call from a witness, assisted the victim to a hospital emergency room and filed a case report for the detectives.

Here we see police responding rapidly and professionally to individual calls for service or complaints about particular incidents. They patrol more intensively when there are complaints and promise to arrest people or warn them to move along. They always generate paperwork to document that they have been busy. However, they have made no lasting impact on what now would be understood as “the problem”: the repeated reappearance of related criminal, disorderly and health-threatening situations at the same address. Police—albeit different officers each time—kept returning to the building to deal with individual incidents, though from the immediate neighbors’ point of view the building never ceased to be a source of concern. The officer assigned to meet with the residents and hear their complaints had no operational responsibilities; his job was to go to meetings.

Chicago’s plan was to retain the best of traditional policing—responding quickly to true emergencies and effectively enforcing the law—while adopting a more wide-ranging, community-oriented and problem-driven approach to their job. Problem solving was to work in tandem with traditional policing, with
police officers also dealing with the conditions that lead to repeat calls and repeat victimization. Unlike in many cities, problem solving in Chicago was not put in the hands of a high-level task force or special units of volunteer officers. Instead, it was the responsibility of officers working on patrol in every beat in the city, around the clock and throughout the week. Several new mechanisms were created to foster resident input, and it was envisioned that civilians would become active partners in problem solving. The organization was restructured to give officers time to attend meetings and work with neighborhood residents, and new tools for addressing problems at the beat level were developed. The process for doing so is supposed to involve five steps.

**Steps Toward Problem Solving**

**Step 1: Identify and Prioritize Issues**

The first step in the problem-solving process is to identify and prioritize the problems that police and mobilized segments of the community will take on. In Chicago, this process takes place in several venues and can utilize information gathered in a variety of ways. One important place where problems are to be identified is community meetings.

[A] resident began complaining about the building next to hers, claiming that the man who owns the building is an alcoholic who might be dealing drugs and who definitely rents rooms to unsavory characters. The beat team allowed her to vent for a few minutes, and then the brainstorming began. As the beat officers started considering what could be done, the woman complaining about her neighbor offered the information that there is no back door on the third-floor apartment that her neighbor rents out. [Another resident] energetically began writing down particulars when she heard that, because it signaled to her that the city’s building inspectors could be called upon.

Concerns were expressed in this way at virtually every meeting between police and neighborhood residents. In 1995 and 1996 we attended a sample of 165 beat meetings in areas that represented the entire city’s demographics. We found that issues falling in the “social disorder” category were discussed most frequently—at 66 percent of all meetings. Drugs came next; they were discussed at 45 percent of the meetings. Drugs were followed by talk about gangs and physical decay problems (tied, at 37 percent of the meetings). There was discussion of a specific crime or two (perhaps a break-in or a mugging) at 31 percent of the meetings, and police and residents reviewed crime patterns
in the area at 29 percent of them. Parking and traffic issues came up about one-third of the time. In short, a wide range of issues arose at meetings. Reflecting the findings of our citywide survey, many of the issues cited involved traditional crime problems, but at least as frequently they concerned quality-of-life issues or maintaining order on the city’s streets and sidewalks.

The city created tools that helped guide these discussions. In 1994 the police department introduced a new crime analysis and mapping system known as ICAM (Information Collection for Automatic Mapping), recognizing the potential for using computers to analyze crime data and that maps would be a familiar vehicle for delivering analytic information to officers and the public. Police officers and civilians working in the department developed a user-friendly crime-mapping system that ran on personal computers. The system enabled street-level officers to become more familiar with crime patterns, as well as to bring crime maps and reports to beat community meetings for review and dissection at those public forums. The system also produced other materials, including a “Top-Ten List” like that illustrated in Figure 2.1. This list summarized the most frequent crimes in any area during the previous month and was a staple of conversation at the meetings. At the 165 beat meetings we observed, the circulation of a crime map or top-ten list was a determining factor in whether there was discussion of crime patterns as opposed to residents simply airing complaints about individual incidents.

Of course, officers also observe problems during their regular round of activities. Sometimes these problems are fairly obvious, but not always. This example, taken from our observation notes, illustrates the kind of ambiguous and unsettling situations that beat officers can encounter in the field:

After driving me around the beat to point out progress on several of the priority problems, [the beat officer] pulled up to a corner at the northeast edge of the beat and parked the car. Explaining that he does much of his paperwork at this corner, he showed me two cars parked, one of which had the motor running and at least three people sitting inside, on opposite sides of the next block. According to the officer, someone sat there on a daily basis throughout the officer’s entire shift. Though he spent considerable time observing them, the officer still had not figured out why they were there or what they were involved in, but he was certain it was drug-related. The officer had run license checks on the two automobiles and found that both were registered to members of a family who lived in an apartment around the corner. At the beat officer’s request, a tactical team had also been keeping an eye on the cars, but the occupants had not yet done anything that warranted a search. So he continued to maintain a presence at the corner, not only to figure out what was going on, but also to possibly discourage whatever it was they were engaged in, at least while he was there.
### FIGURE 2.1
Top Ten List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY OFFENSE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Battery</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Assault</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Telephone Threats</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Telephone Harassment</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Robbery</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Sex Offense</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Order of Protection Violation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Crime Against Family</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Attempted Robbery</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Obscene Phone Calls</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of reported crimes against people from 01 Aug 1997 to 15 Oct 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY OFFENSE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Theft</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Criminal Damage</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Burglary</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Motor Vehicle Theft</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Deceptive Practices</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Criminal Trespass</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Theft and Recovery</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Damage to Personal Property</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Damage to Real Property</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Arson</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of reported crimes against property from 01 Aug 1997 to 15 Oct 1997
Because a number of problems will inevitably surface in every community, it is important to prioritize or to identify which problems should be tackled first. There is some formality to the process, for beat officers working in teams are responsible for determining priorities and recording them on a special form—the beat plan. Then the officers are supposed to work on these issues until they are satisfactorily resolved. How many problems should be on the list is not specified, but it is commonly assumed that a plan featuring three or four problems is about right. Settling on this short list is not always a straightforward process. In Chicago, savvy activists are concerned that police will discount the importance of disorder or quality-of-life issues and stick to their traditional priorities despite what the community voices. Though major crimes are always important, these activists have other priorities as well. They grouse that beat priorities ought to be “democratically agreed upon.” Early on they pressed for official control over what goes on the list. They lost that fight, but did succeed in having the department’s rules specify that beat officers “should give special attention to the problems identified during beat community meetings” when they make up their list.

**Step 2: Analyze the Problem**

The second step in the problem-solving process is to analyze the problem. This seemingly obvious step often gets short-changed. We found that police officers busy in the field often skip directly from identifying a problem to reacting instinctively. In the case of police this typically means more patrols and arrests and telling people to move on (“shagging” them, in local parlance). But if the problem is at all complicated it needs to be analyzed carefully before truly viable solutions begin to emerge. The analysis process also helps those involved learn more about the problem. Analysis helps ensure that strategies selected will actually address the problem’s most important aspects and not just its most readily obvious symptoms.

It is during the analysis stage that “the crime triangle” comes into play. The crime triangle is one of the cornerstones of Chicago’s problem-solving model. It is a way of thinking about problems that focuses attention on the key elements of any situation. As depicted in Figure 2.2, the triangle specifies that every problem is composed of three primary factors: the victim(s), the offender(s) and the location. In this model victims include witnesses and all those who are indirectly affected by the problem. Someone robbed at gunpoint is a direct victim. A park that has been taken over by gangs or drug dealers has many indirect victims, including the children who can no longer play there; dog walkers and elderly residents afraid to walk there; and neighbors who find that this one-time neighborhood asset is now a dirty and
Figure 2.2
The Crime Triangle

Offenders
- How many are there?
- Who are they?
  Nicknames?
- What are they wearing?
  Descriptions?
- How old are they? Are they school aged?
- Are they local? Are they mobile?
- Do they have criminal records?
- Did they display weapons?

Victims
- Who are the victims?
- What do the victims have in common?
- Are there any other potential victims?
- Why are victims vulnerable at this time? In this particular location?
- What resources do victims have to strengthen themselves against the problem?
- Are the victims willing to prosecute and testify?

Location
- Why this particular location?
- Why would offenders be there?
- Is there a school nearby?
- Where do the alleged offenders go?
- Where were the victims coming from?
- Where were they going?
- Are other features of the location contributing to this problem?
- Are any helpful locations nearby?
Churches? Schools? Businesses?
dangerous place. Officers are to ask questions like: What do victims have in common? Does this point to other potential victims? Why are victims vulnerable at this particular time and location? Is there anything victims could do to protect themselves? Are they prepared to step forward with information, to serve as witnesses and to testify in court?

On the second side of the triangle is the location of the problem—its physical setting and social context. Police and residents are trained to ask the questions: Why is the problem happening here and not somewhere else? Why do potential victims come here, and when? Why are the perpetrators at that location? What features of the site make it a magnet for trouble? Who lives or works nearby and can help us? Are there places that can be used as surveillance points? Is the location subject to special regulations or licensing requirements that can be used as a tool to tackle the problem? Chapter 4 introduces a beat, Fiesta, where the concentration of social service offices, free health clinics, food pantries and cheap single-room apartments created an attractive environment for hundreds of street people. The resulting nightly chaos, including problems ranging from public urination to drug dealing, presented one of the most complex problem-solving venues for the police that we encountered. In other areas, all-night grocery stores selling alcohol attracted large numbers of idle men who played music, made noise, drank and approached customers for money. These problems were typically very visible to local residents. Both situations illustrate the importance of understanding the role of locational “magnets” in fostering problems. The fact that police have only recently begun to recognize that a few “repeat call addresses” account for an astonishing percentage of their workload indicates how locationless their practice of reactively responding to radio dispatches really was. Now locations are conceptualized as a bundle of risks and opportunities, both for potential offenders and for problem-solvers. The problem-solving approach to policing gives equal weight to each side of the crime triangle.

Offenders make up the third leg of the crime triangle. They directly cause the problem. In various situations they could be drug dealers, serial rapists or irresponsible landlords or merchants. The questions that need to be asked about offenders include: Who are they and how many are there? Are they local? Are they in school? When do they commit their offenses, and why then? What is their motivation? How are they profiting from their actions? Do they have records, and—especially—are they on probation or parole?

Police are familiar with the offender side of the crime triangle, for catching criminals has always been a big part of their business. Paying careful attention to the other two sides represents something new. In the past, victims were valued mainly as witnesses. They were important for the information they offered concerning “who dunnit” as well as for their willingness to press
charges and testify if called upon. Otherwise, they did not get much attention or support.

Consider our observer’s notes describing a brainstorming session, in this case carried out by a district management team made up of the commander, lieutenants and a sergeant, about a tavern problem in one beat:

Mulling over the problem of disturbances around a tavern, the group started with the offender side of the triangle. After writing “offender” on a blackboard, they listed two groups: patrons, and the owner and his employees. Having identified the offenders, the next step was to describe them, which they did by asking who, what, when, where, why and how about each and then listing the offenders’ various characteristics. According to beat officers, the offending patrons were generally males between the ages of 21 and 50. Some were bilingual, but most spoke only Polish. They came from outside the neighborhood, generally patronized the club on Friday and Saturday nights, and were prone to fighting when intoxicated. The proprietor, a resident of the suburbs, owned several taverns. His employees reputedly served alcohol to minors and did not maintain order on the premises. They had a history of being uncooperative with the police.

Moving on to the location side—another column on the blackboard—the team identified some important factors relating to the location of the lounge: it was situated on a “main drag” with other similar taverns in a largely residential area. The problem tavern had a license that permitted it to stay open and serve alcohol until 4 a.m., which made it an attractive destination for individuals who may have already spent considerable time drinking in other establishments with earlier closing times. Finally, the building did not have windows, making it impossible for a passing police car to see what was going on inside.

The last part of the analysis process was to consider the victims. Writing another column on the blackboard, the group characterized victims as residents of the area who had to endure the effects of the patrons’ public intoxication; surrounding businesses; minors who were being served alcohol illegally; these youngsters’ families; other drivers who were potential victims of the patrons when they left the tavern; and the police themselves for having to expend resources at this location on a regular basis.

Chicago’s crime triangle echoes research on criminal victimization. Many crimes are highly situational—if victims and offenders do not come together under just the right circumstances they may not occur at all. Marcus Felson (1995) identified one of those situational factors as the absence of a “capable guardian”—someone in a position to block, inhibit or apprehend a potential troublemaker. In the case of burglary, a capable guardian may simply be
someone who is home, for their visible presence will usually deter a potential burglar. For street crime, the guardian could be a potential witness or someone who might intervene on a victim’s behalf. In the situation described above, the problem was facilitated by the failure of tavern staff—who are mandated by law to act as effective guardians where liquor is served—to do their job.

The crime analysis and mapping system the Chicago Police Department created was designed to play a role in problem analysis. Figure 2.3 illustrates a real-world problem: an outbreak of public indecency in one sector of a district during a five-week period. The incidents occurred mostly on the west side of the sector, though there were some toward the east. Notably, four incidents occurred in approximately a four-block east-west radius and a one block north-south radius. Other incidents were not quite as clustered within this radius. The map also documented that most incidents occurred on the street, though a few incidents transpired in an alley. What was not shown on the map, but was easily accessible by officers via menus on their computer screens, was that the incidents occurred from Sunday through Thursday, with the majority taking place between Monday and Wednesday.

The crime analysis system allows community factors to be added to the maps to see whether they might have played a role in influencing the distribution of crime in the area. For example, the locations of vacant buildings were displayed along with the incidents to determine whether they could provide a means for the offender to avoid detection before or after an incident. In this case, it did not appear that any of the incidents took place in close proximity of a vacant building.

The next community factor added was schools. Schools could provide a supply of potential victims during certain hours of the day, so their locations were displayed on the map as well. In addition the timing of past offenses was compared with school hours. In this case, it did not appear that schools were a factor. Locations of automatic teller machines (ATMs) were next added to the map, for they can also bring a steady stream of potential victims past a fixed point. This analysis found that there were a few ATMs within a block or two of incident occurrences, so ATMs were considered a possible factor. Next came the location of liquor licenses. The hypothesis was that the offender might have been frequenting licensed establishments, perhaps prior to exposing himself; however, few incidents occurred near addresses with liquor license. The locations of parks were plotted as well, and it was revealed that three incidents took place near an expansive park on the east end of the sector. Public housing developments and mass transit stops could have been added to complete the analysis, but in this case none were in the area.
FIGURE 2.3

Crime Map

- Indecent exposure

31 August 1997 through 13 October 1997
Step 3: Design a Strategy

The third step in Chicago’s problem-solving model is to develop a strategy to attack the problem. A thorough analysis of the matter, with sufficient attention given to the entire “triangle,” might yield strategies that would otherwise not be considered—strategies that could impact several sides of the problem. Common wisdom in Chicago holds that it is necessary to “knock down” at least two sides of the triangle in order to achieve lasting success against a problem. For example, a strategy that focused only on identifying offenders, but ignored the attractiveness of a location and the supply of potential victims, would leave behind opportunities that could attract new offenders to the site. A strategy that was merely location-focused—for example, the object of traditional “crackdown” patrols—could easily just shift the problem to a new site, perhaps still nearby. Instead, police and residents are taught to devise somewhat more comprehensive solutions that aim at making a serious and lasting dent in targeted problems. To monitor this step in the problem-solving process, beat officers are required to complete a beat plan form detailing the strategies they developed to address priority problems.

In one of Chicago’s police beats, residents and police devised three strategies to tackle a problem of daily public drinking, loitering and possible drug dealing by 12 to 50 men who during warm weather congregated in front of a store selling groceries and liquor:

Residents and a neighborhood relations officer discussed their concerns with the Asian store owner. The group suggested that he take action on conditions outside his store. Specifically, they asked him to tell loiterers to leave, to stop selling individual beverage servings and to remove from in front of the store some large boxes that loiterers could lean on—all of which he did. Police issued citations for public drinking, but because that is only a violation of a city ordinance, offenders merely got “a slap on the wrist” in court; there were no fines.

Police and residents congregated in front of the store after beat meetings—a tactic known in Chicago as “positive loitering”—in order to make the undesirable uncomfortable enough to leave. Each effort yielded temporary success. They also conducted a march through the area, and more than 100 residents participated.

The beat meeting activist led a drive to “vote the precinct dry,” something that Illinois law makes possible. He successfully took the lead in the first step of the process, which was to get a requisite number of precinct voters to sign a petition requesting that a referendum be placed on the ballot in the next election. The referendum to ban local liquor sales passed, and the proprietor—who by that
time owned the only remaining liquor store in the precinct—appealed the process. Though he had the support of a sympathetic alderman, he lost the appeal. Eventually he closed his store because of the substantial loss of business after he was no longer able to sell alcohol.

Strategy design is not automatic. It can require “thinking outside the box”—beyond the routines of the job that officers are trained to do and have honed through years of practical experience. Their community partners too often share this traditional definition of police problem solving and will have to be helped past their instinct to demand more patrols and arrests in response to almost every problem. Instead, both sides need to display ingenuity and initiative, and be willing to devote the time and energy that tackling chronic conditions requires. Each of these requirements set a very high bar for success. Participants must determine who will take responsibility for implementing various parts of the strategies, and everyone involved needs to be well-briefed about resources available to them to support problem solving.

Because problems are by definition persistent, at some point in the strategy-design process some participants will almost certainly lament that “this will never be solved.” They might be right, and the model recognizes that partial or interim successes can also be worthwhile.

One key to making problem solving work is training. Problem solving is a new orientation toward policing, and both police and neighborhood residents need to be “retooled” before they can be very effective at it. They need to understand their new roles and responsibilities as well as the tools and resources that are available for them to call upon. Just as important, officers’ immediate supervisors and senior managers—who often are just as new to the concepts as they are—need to understand what it takes to help their people get their new tasks done. The public will know even less about this new approach to policing, and it is important to involve residents in training efforts as well. Chapter 4 examines problem-solving training in some detail and looks at how officers in Chicago were trained to carry out this new program. The chapter also examines the effectiveness of an innovative attempt to train neighborhood residents in problem solving.

Another key to successful problem solving is the availability of tools that police and residents can use to address neighborhood issues—there needs to be a supply of easy-to-access solutions on hand. Chapter 3 describes how police efforts were to be supported by other city agencies. A new administrative mechanism was created that expedited agency responses to service needs identified by beat officers. As a result, beat officers were able to deliver on promises to meet service needs that were identified at beat community meetings. An interagency task force was created that brought
police together with building and health inspectors to conduct sweeps through particularly dilapidated neighborhoods, with a special focus on buildings that were centers for drug or gang activity. In one area, a district commander identified a “super block” (detailed in Chapter 3) that became the focus of a host of city programs. The city dispatched prosecutors to selected districts to help beat officers use the civil-justice process and the city’s labyrinth of codes and standards to put pressure on bad landlords and close drug houses. This later became the model for dealing with needy blocks in other police districts. Civilian court advocacy committees were set up in each police district to monitor the vigor with which prosecutors and judges pursued building code violations. They tracked the progress of cases, made sure that prosecutors had thorough information about the problem and stood up in the courtroom when the case was called to put everyone on notice that the community was taking it seriously. The city provided organizational and financial support for the court advocacy committees, helped transport members to court and kept them up to date on the progress of cases.

**Step 4: Implement the Strategy**

The fourth step in the problem-solving process is to actually implement the strategy. This step, which is distinctive to Chicago’s program, acknowledges the effort that implementation entails as well as all of the things that can go wrong while turning plans into reality. If partner agencies or citizen groups are involved, they need to divide up and coordinate the work. Solutions to chronic problems may take time to evolve, so strategy implementation is generally an ongoing process, spread over at least several months. This also allows participants to rethink or adapt their effort in the light of experience. In Chicago, this stage of the process is monitored by special forms that are to be completed when actions are taken against the beat’s priority problems. Each problem’s plan is supposed to be accompanied by beat plan implementation logs, which are attached to document arrests, special patrols, stakeouts or joint activities with residents. (However, as reported in Chapter 7, we found these to be the least frequently used of the “required” forms. In their absence, there was no record of problem-solving activity that could be monitored by district commanders or the top brass downtown.)

Organized residents found it easier to deliver on their part of the plan. One lesson that Chapter 6 illustrates is that the most effective problem solving is done by activists who are linked to each other and to the community via networks of block clubs, community organizations and local institutions. They keep one another motivated and help one another deliver on their commitments. One group leader described the process:
We give volunteers a step-by-step map of what they need to do—call the building
department, but talk to so-and-so, and don’t settle for less than this. I also follow
up with people. I’ll give someone a call in the middle of the week to see how
they’re doing on their tasks and give them some help if necessary (Fung, 1997).

One function of the beat community meetings held regularly all over the
city is to provide a forum for coordinating and monitoring problem-solving
efforts that are in midstream. In principle both police and residents are to
keep the group apprised of progress being made against problems that have
come up in past meetings and on issues that have been identified as priorities
by police in their beat plan. Civilian activists tried to make a point of using the
meetings in this fashion in order to hold police more accountable for their side
of the problem-solving equation. As we shall see in chapter 7, this more often
failed to happen than it occurred.

Naturally, unforeseen impediments can make a hash of the best-
intentioned plans. Consider the fate of a problem-solving tool developed by
the city to deal with abandoned and dangerous buildings. The Fast Track
demolition program was devised to shorten the seemingly interminable court
process involved in getting a demolition order for an abandoned and
hazardous building. Under the new program, when a building is identified as
abandoned, it must pass through a process involving “only” 11 steps. These
include several inspections and numerous attempts to contact the owner. If all
of the steps are followed and the building has not been boarded-up or
repaired by its owner, demolition can be underway “only” five months after
the first inspection. Fast Track was greeted with great enthusiasm by
community activists, because buildings slated for demolition under the old
system often remained an eyesore and breeding ground for neighborhood
problems for years. The cheering died down, though, when a few months after
Fast Track’s debut, a few buildings were demolished despite the fact that
families claimed to be living in or working on them. The program’s
constitutionality was challenged, citing lack of due process in the 11-step
procedure, and the judge issued an injunction halting Fast Track demolitions
in the interim. The city appealed, and the injunction ultimately was reversed,
but the delay set back a number of neighborhood redevelopment projects.

Other problem-solving efforts ran into unanticipated roadblocks. For
example, when the city decided to accelerate the process by which apparently
abandoned automobiles could be towed, patrol officers were given a new,
simple form to notify the relevant agency that a vehicle needed towing. They
could make this judgment based on the presence or absence of license plates,
a valid city revenue sticker or the vehicle’s apparent driveability. In theory, the
vehicle could be removed after being plastered with warnings and after the
registered owner was sent a seven-day notice. It did not take wily residents lacking license plates, a sticker or a working vehicle very long to realize that they simply needed to move the car a few feet—even if by pushing it—to invalidate its “abandoned” designation.

**Step 5: Evaluate Effectiveness**

The final step in the problem-solving process is to evaluate what happened and learn from the experience. This involves assessing the results of strategy implementation and gauging how well it worked. Much police work has traditionally been evaluated in terms of the effort expended, rather than in terms of whether problems go away. For example, the success of traffic enforcement is usually measured by the number of tickets written, and narcotics enforcement by the number of people arrested. But in truth these are actually measures of failure—the number of motorists who were still driving dangerously and the number of lives still being destroyed by addiction. The “bottom line” for problem-solving policing, on the other hand, is supposed to be discerned by keeping an eye on the problems themselves. To be sure, it is still important to assess the effort itself. Were planned activities actually carried out? Were they done well enough to give success a chance? But as Herman Goldstein points out, problem solving focuses on the substance of policing.

“Success” in the problem-solving model is a relative thing, based on some sort of comparison of what happened and what “might have been” had there been no attempt to solve the problem. One standard is a look at conditions at the time the effort began. Usually success is assessed by asking, “How different is the situation from when we started?” A more sophisticated analysis would consider a broader range of issues. For example, is there evidence that the problem was not simply displaced to another location? Or, did the troublemakers shift to another disruptive activity? When multiple tactics are utilized at the same time, is there any sense of which worked the best?

Success needs to be measured on a sliding scale; in many instances there is a wide range of possible “wins.” These vary from complete elimination of the problem to reducing the harm caused by the problem to reducing the frequency of the problem or perhaps reducing the number of victims. There also can be “process successes.” These include tightening the bond between police and the community or building new partnerships among organizations and agencies. Building the problem-solving capacity of the community is also a significant positive outcome. It is important for participants to think in advance about the level of success that can be achieved in consideration of the time and resources they can invest. These are takeoffs, and in the end, success is necessarily a cost-benefit calculation.
Here are some examples of problem-solving projects that achieved successes, by varying definitions of the term.

Residents of one beat were fed up with drinking and drug use by local teenagers in a secluded industrial area in their neighborhood, so they brought the problem up at a beat community meeting. They agreed to hold a problem-solving meeting at the site, and more than 60 people showed up to work through the problem-solving process. In collaboration with the Department of Streets and Sanitation, the property owners—a railroad, a chemical company and an electronics firm—cleaned up trash and construction debris throughout the area and removed graffiti. In addition, they fixed the holes in the fences and cut shrubs and trees that obscured the area. The companies installed extra lighting, and railroad police worked with district officers to break up a beer party. Residents signed complaints so that parents of the arrested juveniles would have to get involved and come to court. The teen parties ceased, and in an effort to ensure that the area would not become a favorite hangout again, residents agreed to remain vigilant, keep the area clean and call the police when needed.

A street corner was a trouble spot in a South Side beat—street drug dealing and prostitution were frequent there. Residents of the area united to form a block club, installed outdoor lights and agreed to keep a light turned on inside their homes at night. They also displayed more prominent address numbers on the front and back of their homes, set up a neighborhood phone tree and got a stop sign installed. Once the block was in order, residents and beat officers worked with city agencies to get decrepit garages torn down and to clean up vacant lots filled with trash and abandoned cars. A corner liquor store that sold alcohol to minors and was a gang hangout had its license revoked, and the store was shut down after neighbors got organized. Residents’ persistence resulted in a reduction in crime on the beat as well as, they feel, an increase in neighborhood pride.

Police officers and residents of a troubled beat came together for problem-solving training sessions held at the local YMCA. During their discussion it became clear that the group’s priority problem centered around a liquor store. The store was under new management and ownership, but disorderly conditions around it were well-established. The store had a walk-up window at which patrons could purchase liquor and individual cigarettes (“loosies”), and residents complained of harassment by rowdy drunks. At times as many as 300 people congregated in front of the store at night. Police and residents met with the new owners, who agreed to work with their new neighbors. The walk-up window was closed, cigarettes were no longer sold individually and the proprietor installed a security camera. Calls for service for the entire beat diminished dramatically.

Police in one of Chicago’s districts set up a “Junior Beat Meeting” program to address teen issues. The group met at a local Boys and Girls Club. After
learning about its potential role, the group made neighborhood-graffiti removal their summer project. They identified graffiti locations and asked homeowners to sign waivers that allowed city crews to remove it. The program not only involved youths in solving problems, but a camaraderie also developed between officers and young people in the community.

But the impact of a problem-solving project can be unanticipated, and perhaps undesirable. In the case of the Asian-owned grocery-liquor store discussed earlier, neighborhood efforts to eliminate loitering and public drinking around the establishment eventually led to the store’s closing. While residents wanted to put an end to the disorderly activity concentrated there, they would have been content to see the shop stay in business as a convenience grocery store.

In principle, the evaluation step is supposed to inform others about the effectiveness of various problem-solving strategies. During the period we were studying Chicago’s program, few mechanisms were put in place for identifying or communicating these findings. There was discussion of devising an “expert system” that would examine new problems and recommend strategies. There was also a more modest proposal to construct a database of problems and solutions to help officers search for situations that resemble their current task, but neither did anything come of that. The program’s managers knew it was important to find ways to acknowledge and communicate best practices, but except for occasional problem-solving “success stories” circulated by the department’s media unit, dissemination of this valuable and inspiring information seldom took place. A documentary series presented on the city’s cable television channel did illustrate successful efforts of police and community organizations in neighborhoods throughout the city, and while our surveys found that television was the public’s number-one source of information about the program, the telecasts fell far short of the original “expert system” idea.

Changing Roles and Responsibilities

How should all of this look in practice? Consider another vignette, this one describing the problem-solving model in action in one of the study areas.

Prostitutes had staked out a regular “stroll” along a busy street bounding one of the city’s neighborhoods. This problem was noted by beat officers assigned to the area, and it was also brought up at beat community meetings. Those in attendance did not view prostitution as a “victimless crime.” In their view, the victims included women from the area who were being mistaken for prostitutes and solicited for their services. The victims were also children who were
exposed to inappropriate behavior and language, as were residents of the community, which was deteriorating because others were reluctant to move into the area. Citizens and police at a meeting agreed that street prostitution was the area's greatest concern, and at a follow-up meeting the officers and their sergeant decided to include the issue in their beat plan. At the next beat community meeting there was discussion and analysis of the prostitution problem. The group shared information about the women and their pimps, the customers who frequented the area, and the stroll's exact boundaries and hours of business. These details helped suggest some strategies. The location was a three-block strip just off a major state highway. There were several poorly maintained motels where many of the prostitutes conducted their business, and poorly lit streets just surrounding the area where prostitutes also provided their services in cars. The next thing the group considered was what could be changed about the location to make it less hospitable to prostitutes and their customers? There was speculation that the motels were lax in keeping their buildings up to code, and that was something to check into. Motels are subject to many regulations, and several kinds of city inspectors could delve into those. Perhaps other criminal activity was taking place in or around the motels; that information could be pulled out of police records. The police could also request a speed-up in improvements in street lighting in the area to highlight customers and their vehicles. And what about the participants? In this case there were really two—the prostitutes and their “johns.” The prostitutes could be handled with a fairly traditional enforcement strategy: male officers could make “sting” arrests if they were solicited, and this might deter future business in the area. More creative strategies were proposed to deter their customers. Residents proposed listing names of arrested customers in the community newspaper, and an officer suggested having the health department send a letter to their homes to caution their family members that someone in the household had engaged in behavior that could have expose them to infectious diseases. Other suggestions included having the customers' cars impounded. Residents also volunteered to organize a “positive loitering” effort, to walk their dogs and stroll around the area during peak business times, and they organized a march with signs asking the prostitutes to leave and their customers to go elsewhere.

We see here many features of Chicago's new program. How does this differ from traditional policing? There was a great deal of community input into defining the problem and—especially—making street prostitution a police priority. Residents were involved in gathering information about the problem and in brainstorming about solutions to it. A wide range of tactics was discussed, including many that did not involve simply increasing patrols and making more arrests. Some were to be implemented by concerned residents. And in this instance, there were plans to attack all three sides of the crime triangle.
Implications for the Organization

As appealing as the problem-solving concept may be, it was obvious when the program was being developed that this approach to policing could not be grafted onto the existing organization of the police department. It was also clear that the police needed more tools at their disposal because of the expansion of their responsibilities to include a host of new issues. To implement the new model, new roles and responsibilities were imposed on the police and community. Organizational changes had to be made to support the process within the police department, and new channels were developed for community participation in policing. Within the department, the role of beat officers changed significantly. They became responsible for identifying problems, mobilizing city agencies to deal with pressing service problems and communicating much more extensively with residents. New forms of teamwork were required. Sergeants were designated to coordinate the efforts of all of the officers who served in each beat across all watches and all days of the week. They became responsible for a new set of paperwork documenting their teams’ priority problems and their progress in dealing with them. District commanders were pressed to look beyond personnel-management issues and become more aware of the fundamental problems facing their area. The police gained new resources for dealing with problems. A new computer-mapping system was developed to support crime analysis by beat officers, not just specialists. The process by which city services were delivered was extensively “re-engineered” to ensure that the agencies were responsive to new service request forms. New channels were developed for community input into policing issues. Each district formed an advisory committee to represent the community’s needs and to help implement volunteer-based programs that support problem solving. Finally, regular beat community meetings became the norm in all of the city’s police beats. More details about how all of this was actually accomplished are presented in the next chapter.

Chicago’s model for problem solving certainly is still open to the charge that it “papers over” the fundamental sources of its neighborhoods’ problems—sources that include poverty and racism. Many believe that it is necessary to address the “root causes” of problems in order to genuinely deal with them. From this view, problem-solving policing as practiced in Chicago and elsewhere is a “social band-aid” that might be counted among society’s problems rather than its solutions. It gives the impression that the system is addressing its real problems, when it is merely giving lip service to them. However, the view from the trenches is that root causes are mostly beyond the reach of the police, neighborhood groups and even city hall. Partly this is a matter of resources, and partly it is linked to the limited jurisdiction and
authority of local officials and residents. Limits are placed on problem solving by our laws and Constitution—limits that emphasize the rights of individuals and the limited power of police and government at any level to tell residents what to do, or what they can do with their property. Within these constraints, police and activists must envision the conditions they want to achieve and subsequently devise multiple tactics that may get them there. In the real world, there can be a great deal of value in practical and not-too-expensive interim solutions, even for the most fundamental problems.
Organizational Design for Problem Solving

The organization itself would have to change for problem solving to take root and become part of the Chicago Police Department’s ordinary routine. The city did not envision patching problem solving onto an organization that would otherwise continue its old ways. It would be difficult to make the patch stick and hard to envision that anything less than organizational reform would make much of a dent in the problems facing the nation’s third largest city. Instead, problem solving was to become part of the daily routine of everyone in the department. This could only happen if the organization supported it—by finding ways to keep officers committed to small areas of the city, giving them time to work on projects, creating venues at which to meet and work with the public, arming them with a wide range of city services, and rewarding them when they did good work.

This chapter describes the city’s plan—and some of the reality—for “re-engineering” the police organization to support problem solving. To use another piece of contemporary management jargon, the goal was to “reinvent” the organization so it could form a partnership with the community that emphasized crime prevention, customer service, and honest and ethical conduct. Not everything that would have been required to get them there actually made it into the plan, nor was all of the plan fully implemented. Nonetheless, a great deal did change, especially in light of the department’s large size. But much of what was altered would be familiar to police managers around the country, for few, if any, of the organizational changes the program’s managers inaugurated were unique to Chicago, because the logic of problem-oriented policing drives police departments down similar paths.

Among the things introduced when Chicago undertook problem-solving policing were beat integrity, increased responsibility for hands-on supervisors, decentralized planning and decision making, community involvement and
closer coordination among police and other city agencies. These and other aspects of organization design are examined here. Their subsequent success or failure in the field is considered in ensuing chapters, based on our observations of problem solving in practice.

**Beat Orientation**

The first and perhaps most fundamental step in moving a police department toward a problem-solving model is to reconfigure a significant amount of officers’ daily work around a defined geographical area. This enables them to learn about the area and its problems and to become familiar with local hot spots and alternating cycles of troublesome and trouble-free times of day. The reconfiguration also allows them to focus their attention on area residents and issues that concern them specifically. It can facilitate the formation of relationships and perhaps partnerships among police and individual residents and block clubs, as well as with local institutions such as churches, schools and businesses.

Several related changes in the organization, staffing and workload of officers are required for this to take shape, however. Officers must be assigned to one place long enough for residents to know them and learn to trust them. Hopefully the inverse will occur as well, for police distrust of residents of the areas they serve can be deep. In Chapter 4 we shall see that in Chicago police mistrust was considerably deeper than that of community residents. Ideally officers with a turf assignment will have enough time to meet with residents, attend meetings and engage in community work. For this to happen they will have to be freed from responsibility for responding to 911 calls for varying and substantial portions of some shifts, and other officers will have to pick up this additional workload. And when officers are responding to the radio, a significant fraction of their calls should be within the specific area for which they are responsible. All of this requires a flexible 911 dispatching system, but if the computer software that runs an ever-growing proportion of emergency communication systems is not written to accommodate the concept of beat integrity, making all of this happen can be an administrative nightmare. Finally, there will inevitably be pressure to bend these staffing rules to respond to jumps in the volume of 911 calls, demands by politicians for more patrols in their communities, and seasonal festivals or special events that take significant numbers of patrol officers away from their regular assignments.

In Chicago, the geographical building block of the new program was the beat. The city’s 25 police districts are composed of nine to 15 beats, with a total of 279. In the 1990 census, beats averaged about 9,500 residents and 3,600 households, but there was considerable variation among beats. One beat
was home to almost 25,000 people, while another was populated only by museums and parks and had no residents at all. Crime was also very unequally distributed across the beats. In 1995, the year that the problem-solving program began to expand to encompass the entire city, almost 40 percent of the city’s police beats were homicide-free for the entire year, and 90 percent reported six or fewer murders. But one beat had thirteen murders, and three others had twelve. One of our smallest study beats had nine murders that year.

The number of officers serving in each area was determined in large part by a workload formula that took into account calls for service in the area. As part of the new program, uniformed district officers were assigned to either a beat team or a rapid response unit. Beat officers were to be the cornerstone of the new problem-solving effort. Rapid response teams would pick up 911 calls that beat cars could not answer as well as others that were judged to be of low priority for the geographically-oriented units. Police departments are “24-7” operations, so the new beat teams were composed of officers who worked in the same area across all three daily shifts, seven days a week. Ideally, they were to retain these assignments for a minimum one-year period. There were about nine officers per team, with each team sharing a patrol car that displayed the number of their beat on the roof. Command staff made these assignments based on the officers’ skills and personal preferences. Many who preferred the excitement and continual action provided by radio calls angled for a rapid response assignment; others were willing to give the new beat assignments a chance; and some got stuck with jobs they did not want in order to make the numbers match up.

The 911 dispatching process was redesigned to accommodate this new division of labor within each district. Beat officers were to be dispatched less frequently so they would have time to work on neighborhood projects, and they could “go down” from the radio to attend meetings. Whenever possible they were to be sent only to calls that originated in their beat, and even then they were to be exempted from certain classes of calls to which their turf specialization did not seem to make any contribution(among them “in-progress” and traffic incident calls). In an important change, the department for the first time announced a formal call priority plan. Dispatchers were authorized to put certain classes of calls on hold until the proper kind of unit was available to answer, and they were to tell the caller if it would be a while before a car would arrive. The goal was to keep beat teams on their turf—thus maintaining “beat integrity”—at least 70 percent of the time. However, it was impossible to guarantee that officers with beat assignments would stay on the job for more than a year. The city’s contract with the police union left important aspects of department staffing to seniority, so over time there was a
steady circulation of officers through various assignments. This was not necessarily bad news for the program’s managers—they wanted to avoid any long-term division between officers with community assignments and those without, for the latter would inevitably be considered “real cops.” In any event, no one knew exactly how “long term” a long-term assignment needed to be. The resulting turnover of officers each year was noticeable and sometimes more frequent than many community groups thought optimal.

One of the first jobs of the new beat teams was to develop a beat profile, which was to be carried with them in the beat car and updated on a regular basis. Beat profiles were to serve as a reference guide to local community organizations, institutions, recreational institutions and other potential problem-solving resources. Each watch was assigned particular information-gathering activities, including logging the locations of abandoned buildings, 24-hour businesses, schools, banks, taverns and social service agencies. Profiles also noted the beats’ chronic problem areas. Beat officers were also encouraged to get in contact with gang and narcotics units because of their specialized information about the beat. In addition, beat profiles were to serve as both operational tools to support problem solving and educational tools for officers new to the beat. Constructing the profiles also put the beat team in closer contact with a broad spectrum of community members. The program’s managers hoped to computerize beat profiles as the department acquired computers for patrol cars.

Another tool to help officers master events on their beat was the department’s computerized crime-analysis system. Geographic crime analysis was considered a key component of the program; it was to be a “knowledge base” supporting problem identification and analysis. As noted in Chapter 2, an easy-to-use crime-mapping system that ran on computers at each district station was developed, and overnight data entry ensured that results would be timely. The system was quite user-friendly and enabled officers to quickly generate maps of their beats or districts.

Crime maps, reports and beat-related paperwork were stored in a master beat file, which was located in the station and maintained by beat officers and their supervisors and other district personnel. The file was a repository for information supporting development of strategies for addressing crime and disorder problems. A portable version—the beat-plan binder—included beat profiles, crime analysis data, city service requests and several forms designed to help structure and monitor problem-solving efforts. The binder also contained information about other problem-solving resources, including community organizations. Each beat officer had a beat binder and a case to carry it in. They were to keep the binder with them in the car and to take it with them for reference when attending community or police meetings.
Teamwork and Planning

Teams and teamwork are not intuitive concepts in many police departments. In Chicago, loyalties have historically been partner-based, and often officers from one watch have not really known others on different shifts, even though they worked out of the same station. Police work can be a very insular job. A patrol car is “the office” and supervisors use individual accomplishments such as the number of moving and parking violation citations dispensed as measures of their units’ performance.

Chicago’s program stressed the importance of teamwork, though individual officers were to be recognized for their creativity and initiative in resolving neighborhood crime and disorder problems. The task of developing teamwork fell principally to the sergeants supervising each beat team. Sergeants continued in many of their traditional roles: assessing performance, maintaining accountability and ensuring compliance with department directives. New tasks were grafted on to their job description, however, including acting as managers and team leaders; directing the allocation of personnel, time and resources; bringing their officers together around a problem or goal; and providing the motivation needed to keep officers performing at their best. In the department’s new model, supervisors were to recognize and capitalize on the strengths of individuals on their team and to help bolster their weaknesses.

This was a departure from past practice. In addition to fostering better teamwork, Chicago’s new problem-solving model asked sergeants to expand—or more accurately, to develop for the first time—their role as “coaches” for their groups of officers. This reflected a concern on the part of some top administrators that the revolution in managerial strategy that had swept the private sector since the 1970s had bypassed the police department. In too many parts of the department, supervision consisted of watching over officers until they violated any of a very long list of administrative regulations and then punishing them. As we shall see in Chapter 4, the unwillingness of supervisors to listen to them or accommodate their ideas about their work was a major source of dissatisfaction among rank-and-file officers. In yet another new role for them, sergeants were expected to work with their officers rather than lord over them. As supervisors they were to provide input, mentoring and counseling as needed. They were to help their team members prioritize tasks and allocate their time. They were to lobby for the support services officers needed to get their work done. Most of all, sergeants were to help team members engage in innovative problem solving by encouraging them to “think outside the box” and develop new strategies. Sergeants were also expected to attend the department’s community meetings held in their beat and see to it
that the sessions were properly run. Finally, beat sergeants were supposed to take general responsibility for the problem-solving efforts of their units even when not on duty. (It’s a 24-7 job.) While there were still field supervisors on duty during every watch, setting their officers’ long-term agenda and keeping them focused on it every day, around the clock, was the special responsibility of beat team sergeants. This was also a new concept for sergeants, signaling the partial transition of their role from supervisor to manager. Many beat sergeants we interviewed stated that this transition had made their job a lot harder.

Strategies were developed to foster teamwork among officers working at different hours of the day and night. Many involved enhancing the flow of information from watch to watch. This was important, for officers serving at different times of the day had little contact with one another. As they came on duty, each pair of officers set out in their car as if their beat had been in suspended animation during the 16 hours they had been off duty. There was no sense that problems might not match the neat division of the clock into three police watches. One device created for enhanced communication among team members was the daily watch assignment record. This page of information summarized radio assignments, serious incidents, arrests, observations about problem spots and community contacts that officers made during their shift. If there had been follow-up on problems mentioned on the form, that also was to be recorded, including any efforts by special units or city agencies. Beat team members from different shifts were to review daily watch assignment records and other information about current events during a “face-to-face” period that was inaugurated during the personnel overlap at shift changes. During this brief period in the roll-call room, incoming officers were to review information on the daily watch assignment record with the off-going team to learn about any important developments occurring on the beat during the previous watch. Though sergeants had responsibility for seeing to it that face-to-face relief took place, officers actually engaged in this information exchange with highly variable fidelity. But supervising sergeants and their bosses—field operations lieutenants—were required to review and sign the watch records after each shift to ensure they were completed, so they inevitably became the newest “humper” in the patrol division. Every part of the department has a humper—whatever form most closely monitors the actual work of the unit. What made beat officers keep busy was this new running log of all their activities.

Perhaps the most important team-building tool was beat team meetings. These gatherings of beat sergeants and officers serving in the area on all watches took place on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Off-duty officers were paid overtime for attending, and this was often one of the only occasions when beat sergeants saw team members who worked on other shifts. Beat team
meetings had at least two goals: to provide sergeants with an opportunity to exhort their officers to stay focused on priority problems and to provide a forum for officers to discuss beat problems and their possible solutions, both of which were to be formalized in the beat plan. The meetings were held subsequent to beat community meetings, and discussion of problems addressed there was supposed to be on the agenda. Team meetings were an appropriate venue for reviewing what had been done to date about the beat’s priority problems and coming to conclusions about what was working and what was not.

Actual beat team meetings varied in style. Some were beat-officer-only meetings, while others included tactical and gang officers, lieutenants and district administrative managers. A small number of invitations to civilians playing an important role in the beat were extended. Some beat team meetings featured a hum-drum recitation of announcements, while others generated vigorous debates over alternative tactics for dealing with problems. At some, sergeants indeed exhorted their troops to stay on focus, while at others, sergeants who thought their teams were already overloaded refrained from pushing them further. Some stressed the importance of keeping paperwork in their beat binder up to date and completing appropriate report forms after taking action on a problem. Because these meetings were one of many new features for policing in Chicago, during 1997 the department held training sessions for beat sergeants to familiarize them with their new roles. The day-long session was to enable sergeants to help their teams understand the teamwork concept and develop sound problem-solving plans. The training included an overview of the role of planning in problem-solving policing and a demonstration of a vastly enhanced, soon-to-be introduced version of ICAM. However, most of the day was devoted to developing problem-solving plans. Sergeants went through a mock problem using the department’s crime triangle and discussed ways to identify measures of accomplishment.

In the new model, beat sergeants also were charged with formalizing conclusions about their area’s problems and potential solutions in a beat plan. The name was a bit more grandiose than the actual product, which was a one-page double-sided form. Figure 3.1 reproduces the front page of an actual beat plan. It was drawn up to document problems created by youths skipping school and hanging around one of our study beats, Bungalow Belt.

As Figure 3.1 illustrates, the beat plan form called for a brief description of the problem and how the police became aware of it. There was a small space to describe the sergeant’s analysis of the problem and what realistically could be done about it. There was room to identify up to four strategies that would be used to address the problem. On the reverse side of the form (not shown) was a spot to note actions taken as well as a place to indicate the impact those
FIGURE 3.1
Bungalow Belt's Beat Plan

Gang members leaving school early and hanging around park
afternoon and evening causing disturbances.

6. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM
Teens, many of whom are gang
members, are leaving [Local] High
School early and causing distur-
bances. Gang members are also
hanging out in the park in the
afternoons and evenings. [Local]
High School and park have a lot
of graffiti.

7. WHAT BROUGHT THE PROBLEM TO YOUR ATTENTION?
(USE AS CRITERIA FOR MEASURING IMPACT OF PROBLEM SOLVING)
CHECK ALL THAT APPLY:
☐ OFFICER OBSERVATION ☐ SUPERVISORS ☐ OTHER CITY AGENCY
☐ CALLS FOR SERVICE ☐ BEAT COMMUNITY MTG ☐ Elected Official
☐ CRIME ANALYSIS (CAM) ☐ OTHER COMM CONTACT ☐ OTHER:
☐ OTHER UNITS

9. ANALYSIS OF PROBLEM USE THE CRIME TRIANGLE TO HELP ANSWER WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, HOW, AND WHY?
(USE ADDITIONAL PAPER IF NECESSARY)
Although [Local] High School is a closed campus, residents have observed students
leaving early. It is known that they are legitimate excused or truants. Some of
these teens are causing disturbances around the area of XXth Street and [Local] Park.
There are also reports that gang members hang out in [Local] Park during the evenings
and afternoons. Residents have expressed some trepidation about using the park and
the area of XXth and [Local] St. [Local] High School and [Local] Park have one of the
highest incidents of graffiti in the district. This problem is most noticeable when
school is in session.

10. DEVELOPMENT OF TARGETS (GOALS): WHAT CAN BE REALISTICALLY ACCOMPLISHED TO ADDRESS THIS PROBLEM
(INCLUDE A TIME FRAME UP TO ONE YEAR)
Reduction of graffiti and residents fear. 4 to 6 months.

11. WHAT STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM? (USE ADDITIONAL PAPER IF NECESSARY)
STRATEGY: At beat community meeting to be
held on XX/XX, we will ask for citizen
volunteers to contact the principals of
[Local] and [Local] schools and ask them to
come to our Oct. beat meeting and ask them
to work with us.
RESPONSIBILITY ASSIGNED TO:

STRATEGY: Possibly plan some type of event or
activity in [Local] Park: a clean-up day,
or no gang rally, etc. for fall or spring.
RESPONSIBILITY ASSIGNED TO:

STRATEGY: Ask Beat X problem solving group to help
us with this problem
RESPONSIBILITY ASSIGNED TO: Bungalow Belt Officer

STRATEGY: Continue to enforce all violations of the
law noticed by beat team members.
RESPONSIBILITY ASSIGNED TO: Beat Team 2nd and 3rd
shift

COMPLETE FORM AT BEAT TEAM MEETING
actions had on the problem and which action had proven most effective. The program’s senior managers reviewed the first set of beat plans that were developed and were not happy about their quality. The worst among them identified nonpriority problems, lacked analysis of what was going on, set unrealistic goals (if any at all) and suggested only traditional enforcement activities as strategies. The best plans demonstrated that attempts had been made to fully describe and analyze problems, but even those were weak in terms of clarity of their goals and creativity of planned strategies.

Figure 3.1 represents a satisfactory beat plan. The rich description of the problem provides an adequate explanation of what was happening on the ground, as well as a sufficient description of who was involved and where and when the untoward activity took place. The fact that four sources were listed for the problem indicated it was not a casual nuisance; it reflected the concerns of the community (it was brought up at a beat meeting), and city service agencies and beat officers had both made note of it. Sufficient analysis was provided following the crime triangle: the “whos, whats, whens, wheres, hows and whys” were presented, and victim(s), location and offender(s) were identified. The goal of reducing graffiti and resident fear in a four- to six-month period seemed realistic, and the four proposed strategies were a good mix of traditional enforcement and community-oriented efforts.

After settling on their priority problems and plans of action, beat teams were to carry out the remaining steps of the problem-solving process: implementing the strategy, keeping residents informed about progress and involving them when appropriate, and evaluating their own effectiveness. The final piece of the paper trail to be created by beat teams was the beat plan implementation log. This form was to be used to record actions that were taken to carry out strategies identified in the beat plan. Listed on these logs were arrests, patrols, searches, service requests, special meetings and other activities undertaken by team members. Officers found these forms particularly tedious. Although they logically flowed from the process that was developed by the department, these documents seemingly punished rather than rewarded action by imposing yet another piece of paperwork when something got done. Like beat plans, implementation logs were supposed to be reviewed and approved by lieutenants who were in charge of the beat team sergeants. Another piece of paper that was supposed to circulate past them was the intra-departmental support services request, which documented any help that beat teams needed from gang and tactical units, the detectives or any other special unit. When we inspected beat files, much of this paperwork was usually missing. As we shall see, reticence to complete the paperwork contributed to an information vacuum at the top of the organization about exactly what their officers were doing.
Beat plans were also the building blocks on which a “bubble-up” planning process was to be built. By beginning at the grass roots, ordinary citizens, active community groups and beat officers would have a voice in identifying police priorities. Once completed at the beat level, the plans were to flow upward in the district management structure, informing the higher levels about the district’s real priority problems and the resources managers needed to assemble to assist beat teams in addressing them. Beat plans were to form the basis for creating a district-level plan that the commanders would carry when negotiating their resource needs with their immediate chiefs and top brass at police headquarters. District plans were also to identify underlying conditions that contributed to and prevented elimination of the beats’ chronic problems as well as propose strategies to mobilize the police, city service agencies, other government resources and the community to tackle them.

Community Involvement

Discussions of problem solving often involve assumptions about the role the community will play—assumptions arrived at too casually. It is usually anticipated that citizens will be eager to step forward to work with police. Supporters of problem solving frequently assume that police and residents will easily engage in well-coordinated efforts to tackle neighborhood problems once mechanisms that make it possible to do so are in place. There is even talk about the role that police can play in fostering development of community organizations and mobilizing the unorganized public around problem-solving and community-building projects. However, while the community side of the problem-solving model is of vital importance, many cities have experienced difficulty getting neighborhood residents involved. The Vera Institute found in its study of community policing in eight cities that “all eight . . . sites experienced extreme difficulty in establishing a solid community infrastructure on which to build their community policing programs.” Researchers concluded that of all the implementation problems these programs faced, “the most perplexing . . . was the inability of the police departments to organize and maintain active community involvement in their projects” (Grinc, 1994: 442 and 437). Police often do not get along well with residents, nor with the organizations that represent them. When there is good will it is still necessary to educate residents and activists about their new roles and about what they (newly) can expect the police to take responsibility for.

Resident involvement is crucial because effective problem solving requires responsiveness to citizen input about community needs as well as about the best ways the police can help address them. It takes seriously the public’s own definition of its problems. As in the business community, this is known as
“listening to the customer.” This is one reason why problem-solving policing is an organizational strategy rather than a set of specific tactics or formulas to be followed. The way it looks in practice should vary considerably from place to place, responding to unique local circumstances and the resources that police and community residents can bring to bear on problems. Better “listening” to the community should produce different policing priorities. In our experience, officers involved in neighborhood policing quickly learn that many residents are deeply concerned about problems that previously escaped police attention and for which police are not very organized to respond. The public often focuses on threatening and fear-provoking conditions rather than on discrete and legally defined incidents. In addition, residents are often concerned about casual social disorder and the physical decay of their community rather than about traditionally defined “serious crimes,” but police are organized to respond to the latter. Community residents are unsure whether they can (or even should) rely on the police to help them deal with these problems. For their part, routines of traditional police work ensure that officers will largely interact with troublemakers or citizens who are in distress because they have just been victimized. Problem solving requires that departments develop new channels for learning about neighborhood problems from a wider community perspective.

At the core of Chicago’s program lay the formation of police-community partnerships focused on identifying and solving problems at the neighborhood level. One new function for police was to identify and help mobilize community resources for solving problems, and another was to draw other city agencies into responding to local concerns. In his announcement of the new program, the department’s superintendent noted, “...the Department and the rest of the community must establish new ways of actually working together. New methods must be put in place to jointly identify problems, propose solutions and implement changes. The Department’s ultimate goal should be community empowerment” (Rodriguez, 1993: 16).

Commitment to community involvement was operationalized in two ways. New district-level advisory committees were formed to meet with commanders and district staff. These committees were made up of representatives of significant organizations and institutions in the district. They were to focus on broad issues related to crime and disorder problems affecting large sections of the district and to help establish priorities and develop strategies to address those issues. Advisory committee meetings provided a forum at which district commanders could report on their activities and describe their plans. Monthly gatherings known as beat community meetings also began in every beat. They brought together small groups of residents and the officers who actually worked there. These meetings were held in church basements, hospitals and
park district buildings all over the city. They were to be the locus for identifying local problems and local resources for dealing with them. Beat meetings and district advisory committee gatherings were the principal forums for the development of joint police-citizen plans for tackling neighborhood issues.

**Advisory Committees.** District advisory committees were composed of organization leaders, business owners, religious leaders, local school council members, university representatives, hospital administrators and other stakeholders in the community. The committees varied in size but averaged about twenty members. The character of problems facing each of the city’s districts were very distinct, and so too were the advisory committees. Chosen by the district commanders, committee members were initially appointed in acknowledgment of their record of service to the community. Balancing ethnic affiliations and geography was also of high priority in the member-selection process. Initial appointees served two-year terms, with new members being elected to the post by those remaining on the committee. In some districts, beat representatives were also part of the committee, while in others they constituted a subcommittee chaired by a committee member. Aldermen, park district employees and representatives of city, county and state agencies also regularly attended meetings in some districts, though they did not have the policy-making voting privileges afforded to resident members. The principal role of governmental and agency representatives was to take note of problems that their organizations could respond to. Advisory committees generally met monthly.

Committee members often headed subcommittees, and in most districts the bulk of the work actually got done by the subcommittees. The department guidelines for the committees specified that each would appoint court advocacy and senior citizen subcommittees, and that other subcommittees were to be established “as required to address the issues of community concern, such as school safety, youth services, economic development, etc.” Subcommittees were also charged with responsibility for “researching issues, identifying, developing and implementing solutions, and mobilizing appropriate community resources.” All subcommittee recommendations were subject to the approval of the full committee, and hearing subcommittee reports was part of each month’s agenda.

District advisory committees were slow to get off the ground. They were initially without direction, and few police commanders had clear ideas about how they could be used. In some districts they principally represented organizations and local influencers who already had the ear of the commander and could be trusted not to make any trouble. In a few areas, committee members felt they should set policies and had the authority to tell commanders
what to do, but they were quickly slapped down. Each of the district advisory committees had to fight the temptation to focus on specific issues affecting only small segments of their community. Most concerned themselves inordinately with internal organizational matters—such as writing by-laws and arguing over who could sit at the table—in the absence of any model for how to proceed in giving advice. In some racially diverse areas board members jostled with one another for control of the agenda, but it was more common for disenfranchised groups to be underrepresented on the advisory boards. In at least one politically charged district, advisory committee politics mirrored pre-existing conflicts among organizations in the community. During our study period, committees that languished were those consumed by political infighting or those that could not identify focused leadership.

Over time, guidelines were developed for the district advisory committees. They delineated the purpose of the subcommittees and their composition, the selection of committee members and terms of office, attendance requirements and support that could be expected from the department. A few commanders involved committee members in drafting their first district plan, and more used committee meetings as forums to present their product to the public. Most advisory committees took on the tasks of enhancing communication with district residents about policing matters, encouraging participation in beat meetings and identifying individuals who could serve as facilitators at those meetings. Many advisory committees sponsored rallies and seminars on topics of interest and held picnics and police-recognition dinners. Some surveyed residents to learn what issues were top priorities for them. However, the committees found themselves stymied in some of the simplest efforts—like getting important notices photocopied or arranging for small groups of often elderly residents to go to far-flung court hearings—due to lack of funding. In response, the city’s implementation office (discussed below) created a discretionary fund of $4,000 for each board. While this was useful, the paperwork and Byzantine bureaucratic regulations that initially encumbered the funds made it hard to make use of the money.

**Beat Community Meetings.** The other official mechanism for building and sustaining close relationships between police and the public was the beat community meeting. These meetings provided a forum for exchanging information and working on identifying, prioritizing and analyzing problems in the area. They also provided occasions for police and residents to meet face-to-face to get acquainted—something that was facilitated by the formation of teams of officers with a relatively long-term commitment to working in the beat. These gatherings were the most important vehicle through which police-community partnerships could develop. Beat community meetings began on a citywide basis in the spring of 1995.
Beat community meetings were public sessions open to everyone. An average of seven police officers attended the meetings we observed; often present were officers serving in special units, a representative of the district’s neighborhood relations unit and sometimes higher-ranking members of the district management team. Those attending with regularity were beat officers on duty at the time, a few team members from other shifts and the sergeant who supervised the beat team. Approximately half attended during their off-hours and thus were paid overtime. This was not cheap: an officer with 10 years’ experience (about the department’s average at patrol officer rank) received an extra $117 for attending, and in the aggregate the commitment to involve in the meetings officers from all shifts cost the department about $780,000 per year. These meetings were also attended on an occasional basis by representatives of the city’s service departments, staff employed working for local aldermen and organizers from area community groups. School principals and local business operators came as well. Over time, the variety of meetings involving police and the public grew as the districts found new purposes for public gatherings. In some areas there were special meetings for business owners and operators. In others, separate beat-level meetings were held with neighborhood activists to review action plans and progress on problems. In larger or more diverse areas beats were sometimes subdivided. In areas plagued by low turnout, adjacent beats held combined sessions to boost the number in attendance, and sometimes the gatherings were held less frequently. Beats and districts also sponsored marches, rallies and block parties that engaged considerable numbers of residents.

Beat community meetings were generally held at a regular time and place each month in order to facilitate attendance. We estimate that between January 1995 and May 1997 about 140,000 people attended. Like advisory committee sessions, most beat community meetings were held in church basements, park district field houses, schools, libraries, hospital cafeterias and other public and easily accessed locations; most started at 6:30 or 7 p.m. Attendance varied by beat and by season. Over the 1995-1997 period, an average of 27 residents attended monthly beat meetings in our 15 study areas. Meetings in one white middle-income area averaged 100 participants; the average in our poorest beat was only 14. Six of the 15 beats averaged fewer than 20 participants; six fell between 20 and 30; and in three areas an average of more than 30 people came to beat community meetings each month. Chicago’s weather had an impact, too; an average of 33 residents attended meetings June through October, but on average only 13 came in December and 16 in January.

While beat meetings were to be the forum for problem solving involving police-community partnerships, they did not get off to a very good start. Many became “911 sessions” at which residents described their problems and
insisted that police take action. Others were “show and tell” meetings at which police lectured while residents sat mute. Almost always officers not addressing the group sat together in the back of the room, stone-faced with arms folded. The original vision was that officers who actually worked on the beat would take leadership roles at the meetings, but few did. Instead, they deferred to the department’s community-relations specialists, who were much more skilled at running meetings and defusing potential conflicts between police and complaining neighborhood residents. However, this enabled officers assigned to the beat to remain unengaged. Another unanticipated difficulty was that gang members or other neighborhood troublemakers would sometimes attend, creating an atmosphere that was not conducive to open discussion.

To address this, the department held training sessions for both police and community members, who were coached about the basics of problem solving. Sergeants were given additional instruction on how to conduct meetings and engage the public in the program. (Some of this training is described in detail in the next chapter.) In addition, written guidelines were developed outlining key steps to running an effective beat meeting. Emphasized was the need for mutual respect for each side’s opinions; the importance of encouraging participation while managing the conversation and handling difficult situations tactfully; and the necessity of staying focused on the purpose at hand—solving neighborhood problems. A video was produced depicting a model beat meeting. Neighborhood relations staff were ordered to step down from leading the meetings, as it was the job of beat team officers.

The department also issued a guideline describing a new civilian leadership role—beat facilitator. According to the official statement, beat facilitators were volunteers who were to serve “... as ‘translator’ or ‘communicator’ between beat residents and stakeholders, and between these groups and the police” (Chicago Police Department, 1997, p. 1). According to the guideline, they could assist in setting the agenda for beat meetings, co-chair the sessions and help keep the meetings focused on the problem-solving process. They could also help publicize meetings and assist in following up on problem-solving activities of community members. The memo reemphasized that police were still in charge of the meetings. Activists in some areas were vying for control of the meetings, and insisting on civilian chairpersons was one of their tactics. While the guideline included a list of resources that facilitators could command—including attendance lists, beat profiles, beat plans and ICAM maps—it noted that beat teams were responsible for scheduling the meetings, ensuring that they actually took place and seeing to it that they were places of safety for participants. Police personnel were also responsible for preparing for the meeting, bringing information and doing whatever follow-up was required.
Our observations indicate that only about 5 percent of beat meetings were confrontational, featuring angry exchanges between police and residents. But the big problem was that many simply were not very productive. Typically meetings were unfocused; observers judged that two-thirds of the sessions had no clear agenda. Even at the end of our project, beat meetings were still not achieving their goals in many places. Frequently neither police nor citizens understood the problem-solving model, and too many participants on both sides still shared a very traditional view of policing and what they could together accomplish. Residents were very good at identifying problems; in the meetings we observed, they raised 65 percent of the issues and did so jointly with police 30 percent of the time. However, when it came to discussion of what to do about those problems, police proposed about two-thirds of the solutions. On the other hand, police still did not seem to be doing very much, so savvy neighborhood activists tried to use the meetings to hold them more accountable for their problem-solving efforts. They called for reports on activities since the last meeting and asked police to commit themselves to a plan of actions to be taken before the next meeting. Activists constantly reminded everyone present that problem solving was a partnership. They also pressed their community-empowerment agenda. They stressed the active involvement of the public in the process. As one put it, “we’re not just the eyes and ears of the beat; we’re also the brains and brawn.” And they were correct. Department guidelines specified that every meeting’s agenda should include a discussion of progress on problem-solving projects, reports on crime conditions, the identification of new problems and strategies, and coordination of responsibility for implementing new efforts. However, we observed that crime maps were not passed out at one-third of the meetings, though this was perhaps the simplest of all possible police contributions to the sessions.

Beats that were most organized prepared in advance for the meetings. Residents of those beats held “pre-meetings” of activists to set agendas and prioritize problems that were definitely to be discussed. They tried to find civilians to co-chair the meetings and worked hard to make the gatherings serious, focused and productive. Organized community members also tried to form ad hoc problem-solving groups around specific priority problems, using beat meetings as forums for recruiting members and reporting back to the community on their progress. However, we still found that calls for volunteers or sign-up sheets went out at less than half of the meetings that we observed.

City Hall’s Implementation Office

The implementation office, staffed by civilians, reported directly to the mayor. It was created in the summer of 1995 and charged first with mounting an
outreach campaign that would spread public awareness of the program. Later its responsibilities grew to encompass a wide variety of efforts to press implementation of the civilian end of the city’s problem-solving program. A senior staff member was delegated to head a court-advocacy project. Other staff members focused on community organizing efforts in particular beats and districts. Finally, the office played a role in monitoring the delivery of city services in response to special requests.

Opinion polls that we conducted suggested that awareness of the program actually declined during its first full year, creating a sense of urgency about this. Beginning in 1996, the office inaugurated an aggressive and well-funded marketing program. The campaign made use of informational booths and kiosks at neighborhood festivals; newsletters and videos; signs and posters; and advertisements on television and radio and in newspapers. All of these promotional materials were reproduced in several languages, and outreach to non-English speaking communities was one of the special foci of the office. Staff members represented the program at the city’s festivals, parades, marches and rallies. At their booths they gave away posters, pins, pens, refrigerator magnets, bumper stickers, hats and tee-shirts. Most featured a program logo and the slogan, “Safe Neighborhoods Are Everybody’s Business.” They distributed promotional material to community organizations, libraries, businesses, churches and schools. Staff members attended special events to represent the program and gave presentations at beat meetings. Often they brought videos that demonstrated how to conduct problem-solving sessions or that illustrated effective partnerships between police and citizens. They helped coordinate district-level marches, and often the mayor was able to attend and lead the way. Once or twice a year staffers organized citywide rallies that were attended by hundreds of neighborhood activists. These day-long sessions featured speeches and videos, and interactive workshops on topics such as problem solving, running effective beat meetings, the role of district advisory committees, court advocacy and ways in which to deal with gang, drug and landlord problems.

During 1997 the implementation office also spent about $1.5 million on media promotions. Many television spots were aired during professional sporting events, reaching large numbers of viewers. The office also funded the development of video documentaries about the program, and they were presented on cable television as the “Crime Watch” series. About $600,000 was spent on television advertising, and our spring 1997 citywide survey found that 27 percent of all Chicagoans had heard about the program on television. Another $700,000 was spent on radio promotions. Only about 10 percent of Chicagoans recalled hearing about the program on radio, but it proved an important way to reach the city’s Latino population; the figure for those who
daily spoke Spanish was 22 percent, and this was their second most common source of information about the program. The radio promotions also featured local sports heroes. Another $120,000 was spent on newspaper advertisements, a more common source of information for whites and those with more education. Billboards and posters promoting the program cost a little more than $100,000 and reached about 8 percent of the population. The water utility sent a mailing to residents along with their bill, and a similar mailing was distributed to 800,000 addresses by a cellular telephone provider. The city inserted information sheets in its employees’ paycheck envelopes, including an announcement of the next meeting in their own beat. In 1996, a multicolor informational newsletter was mailed to every household in Chicago. In addition, many pizza parlors and carry-out restaurants attached leaflets to their boxes and businesses displayed brochures near their cash registers. Public and Catholic schools enclosed flyers with student’s report cards, and the 1997 revenue sticker displayed on the windshield of every properly registered automobile in the city featured the program logo. Between 1996 and 1997 public awareness of the program grew from 53 percent to 68 percent, and by 1998 it reached 79 percent.

The implementation office also employed full-time organizers whose job description included rallying involvement in beat meetings and problem solving. By early 1997 there were 25 such organizers, and more were hired later. Many spoke languages other than English, and they were knowledgeable about particular areas of the city. They initially focused on program recognition but then shifted to supporting actual involvement in problem solving. Implementation office workers identified and supported active block clubs and tried to tie the groups’ activities to problem solving through the police department’s program. They also attempted to form new organizations, but this eventually became the special responsibility of the additional organizers hired in early 1998. Other staff members were specifically assigned to support court-advocacy projects and provide technical support and information about citizen involvement in housing and landlord-related issues. The implementation office coordinated the work of a special committee that drew up ground rules and guidelines for citizen advocacy in the courts. The committee comprised judges, representatives of the sheriff’s office, the court clerk and concerned citizens. The implementation office also trained court advocates. The office’s area service coordinators had the job of checking on the effectiveness of the service delivery part of the program, including verifying the accuracy of service request status reports. Area service coordinators were also permitted to initiate service requests and were among the few civilians who had the authority to do so.
Neighborhood Relations Units

Every police district had a neighborhood relations office, headed by a sergeant and staffed by several officers. These individuals were supposed to educate the community about police powers and responsibilities, facilitate cooperation between the community and the police, and help defuse tensions within the community and between the police and neighborhood residents. Most neighborhood relations offices included staff members specially assigned to assist senior citizens. When groups or organizations wanted a speaker on policing issues, they called neighborhood relations. The office was also a place where residents could request information and lodge complaints of a non-emergency nature. Prior to the inception of Chicago’s problem-solving program, neighborhood relations was virtually the only place in the department where citizens could routinely get or give information. In the past the job of the neighborhood relations sergeant was a cozy sinecure, and it was often held by a friend of the commander. The staff worked the day shift, Monday through Friday, and going to coffee with folks from the neighborhood was a big part of the job.

Chicago’s new program changed much of this. More officers were assigned to the unit, and two shifts per day rather than one began to operate. The new participatory structures that were created featured infinite evening and weekend meetings that demanded the presence of sergeants and their staff. During the early years of the program—while it was still being developed in the experimental districts—neighborhood relations officers organized and led beat meetings. Later they were instructed to withdraw from a leadership role, but representatives of the office were virtually always still present at beat meetings, and they were often called upon to answer questions. The new program also spawned more paperwork that had to be taken care of (always treated as an affliction among police), and much of this was dumped on neighborhood relations’ lap. Staff needed to maintain address lists and create newsletters. Some got involved in youth work through the department’s Explorer Scout program and various athletic activities. Commanders still needed to trust that their sergeants would keep a door open for the public, but the sense that they were their personal sidekick faded. The sergeant’s personal qualities and community contacts were important, and there was clear pressure for neighborhood relations officers to reflect the dominant ethnic or racial composition of the district. Due to these changes, being the sergeant in charge of neighborhood relations became a much less coveted job. Many complained that they were overworked and reminisced about the old (easier) days.
The districts’ neighborhood relations offices also provide the organizational “home” for officers assigned to foot beats, although their work was really coordinated by supervisors in charge of field operations. Rather than asking officers to alternate vehicle and foot work (which would require finding ways to get them out of their cars, especially in the winter), Chicago traditionally assigned some officers to more-or-less permanent foot postings. Every district had a few foot officers, their numbers dependent on local needs. In popular view, community-oriented policing is often closely associated with foot patrol. People who do not know much else often think that community policing means “lots of officers on foot talking to people.” But in fact it has little to do with how police get around, and Chicago’s program has never featured much foot work outside of the central business district. When O. W. Wilson was appointed Chicago’s police chief in the 1960s and charged with repairing the breach between police and the public that was opened by a terrible corruption scandal, he assigned a few foot patrol officers to each district as a public relations move. Not much was expected of these officers; they were to be crowd-pleasers.

By ordinary measures of performance within the department—arrests, citations, guns seized and the like—they were very unproductive, and they could rarely outrun a patrol car when it came to responding to 911 calls. Now they can respond somewhat more easily to emergency situations because they carry dispatch radios on their lapels, and they are often picked up by nearby patrol cars when they are needed to serve as back-up on emergency calls. Foot patrol officers remain very popular with the public. Consistent with research elsewhere on foot patrol (see Pate, 1986), Chicagoans who see officers about in their community feel safer and think that the police are being more effective and responsive (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). At beat meetings foot officers often showed a level of knowledge about their turf that was unequaled by their automobile-bound counterparts. Foot officers were well-known to residents and familiar with the “regulars” along their path. They are usually assigned to busy, high-visibility locations, including in and around transit stops, along arterial streets with dense commercial activity and in areas with a high concentration of taverns. Business owners delight in seeing foot officers on patrol and often offer them discounts and take good care of them at Christmas. On several occasions efficiency-minded police administrators have attempted to downsize the department’s foot contingent, but their efforts are always stymied by organized community protests. As we shall see in Chapter 7, the role that foot officers played in problem solving varied greatly across districts, and places where they were left out were worse for it.
As noted in Chapter 2, a thoroughgoing problem-solving orientation inevitably leads to an expansion of the police mandate to include a broad range of concerns that previously lay beyond their job description. The expansion of their agenda to include a new and wider range of issues arises in response to several factors. Most importantly, the expansion of the mandate reflects consumer demand; when beat officers meet with neighborhood residents, the concerns that will be voiced include all manner of problems, and often the kinds of crimes that police traditionally are organized to tackle are fairly low on their list. Residents can be equally concerned about garbage strewn in alleys, graffiti on garage doors and landlords renting to threatening-looking people as they are about burglary and car theft. The leaders of Chicago’s program knew that if officers’ response to community concerns was “that’s not a police matter,” residents would not show up for further meetings. But if they were to take on these problems, they would need help from the appropriate service providers. Police involvement in coordinating services also reflected city hall’s plan to use problem solving to inject more voter-friendly responsiveness into the city’s service-delivery system. As part of organizing this new system, put in place were service standards and accountability mechanisms that advanced the mayor’s municipal efficiency agenda as well as supported problem solving.

So, from the beginning the delivery of city services was linked to the program via special service request forms. They could be generated by anyone in the department, but service requests were the special domain of beat teams. Officers’ service requests triggered a prioritizing and case-tracking process that greatly increased the responsiveness of other city agencies. City departments most involved in the program included the Department of Streets and Sanitation, mostly to handle graffiti removal, tow abandoned cars and fill potholes; the Department of Buildings, to take action on abandoned and troublesome properties; the Department of Transportation, to replace missing or damaged signage; and the Department of Forestry, to keep up with tree trimming. The Mayor’s Office of Inquiry and Information (MOII) served as the conduit for requests for assistance. The successful integration of problem solving with a broad range of city services was one of the most important early successes of the program.

The process was a simple one. Officers could complete a few lines on a one-page service request form and submit it with the rest of their paperwork at the end of their shift. Sometimes they did this independently, based on what they observed while on patrol. Often they did so as a result of a beat community meeting or a discussion with neighborhood activists or business operators. Service request forms were frequently filled out by neighborhood
relations officers as a result of telephone calls from the public or information they gathered at public meetings. Citizens could also walk into a district station and request that a desk officer submit a request for service. Emergencies, potentially dangerous road conditions, graffiti and problems generating a number of citizen complaints were dealt with quickly. If the situation required immediate attention, neighborhood relations contacted an MOII supervisor; when the request was more routine, neighborhood relations sent the form to MOII via interoffice mail. MOII assigned a case number, entered it into their computer and then directed the request to the appropriate agency. MOII tracked the status of each request and for each district generated a biweekly report summarizing work in the area and reporting the progress of open cases.

Regular meetings were held among agency representatives, city hall representatives and district commanders to review problems that emerged in this process. In addition, workers for the implementation office independently checked the status of selected service requests to ensure that the agencies were presenting an honest account of their accomplishments. The official monthly completion rate for service requests was about 92 percent. The process was slower for some requests because of state statutes requiring that individuals be notified before action could be taken. In the case of abandoned or dilapidated buildings, owners’ property rights had to be respected by police and the courts.

The process was far from perfect. Agencies would queue nonpriority requests until enough had accumulated to merit sending out a truck, therefore officers and residents alike perceived that city services were slow to respond. And old bureaucratic habits persisted. For example, the sign department insisted on marking requests as completed when they made the sign (when their job was done), not when it finally got put up (when the problem was rectified). There could be confusion about the location of problems not clearly associated with an address as well as inaccuracies in record keeping. Some jobs had to be transferred among departments. The biweekly reports that MOII sent to the districts were of formidable length and detail. On the police side, a significant number of officers continued to insist that delivering services was not their job and thus refused to deal with the very simple new form. However, many did, and there was general satisfaction with how well the service-delivery process functioned.

An experiment in multi-agency coordination spawned a new approach to dealing with particularly high-risk areas. The “Super Block” concept was developed by a district commander in the winter of 1995 when he brought together local aldermen, financial institutions committed to the area, neighborhood activists, housing rehabilitation groups and city agencies to ask them to focus their efforts on one block. His was one of the toughest districts in the city, and the block they identified was among his worst. Its most evident
problem was narcotics sales. Young men stood at both ends of the block advertising their wares, crying “rocks and blows!” at passing cars. The block was pockmarked with abandoned buildings.

Super Block incorporated three key elements of the city’s problem-solving program: it was proactive; it involved partnerships with the community; it had the support of city agencies. The commander enlisted the support of the Government Assistance Program (GAP), an affiliate organization of a local university, to document the project, facilitate strategic planning sessions focusing on the area and assess Super Block’s progress. The planning sessions served as a forum where residents and beat officers engaged in open dialogue to learn to work together. A local block club was revived, police presence was increased and buildings on the block were rehabilitated. A vacant, garbage filled lot on the block was cleaned, equipped and converted into a park.

Because of Super Block’s promise, the city designated four additional Super Blocks in other communities. When the commander was promoted and left the district, local residents insisted that the park be named after him.

Other tools were developed to support problem solving. A new city ordinance enabled the city to warn landlords and then inspect to determine if their buildings were serving as drug or gang houses. To enforce the ordinance, the city created the Strategic Inspections Task Force, made up of representatives from key city departments such as buildings, law, revenue, health, police and fire. Where there was evidence of illegal activity or code violations, building owners were given a chance to comply with an abatement plan drafted by one of the city’s lawyers. The city was willing to negotiate the precise details of each plan, but details frequently involved evicting trouble-making tenants and investing in new security measures. Owners who refused to negotiate or comply voluntarily could be brought before a new administrative office, the Code Enforcement Bureau, and ordered to go along with a city-imposed abatement plan. Criminal charges could be lodged against owners who refused to acquiesce to a plan. The ordinance facilitated compliance by amending the city’s tenant protection laws to make it easier to evict problem residents. In parallel with the Strategic Inspections Task Force, the city began a landlord training program. The program helped building managers do a better job of screening tenants and recommended requiring that leases committed tenants to lawful behavior. Landlords learned how to obtain eviction notices if tenants did not comply and about other mechanisms for dealing with criminal activity in and around their buildings.

To facilitate this process on the police side, the city experimented with assigning assistant corporation counsels—city lawyers—to six districts. There they assisted beat officers in dealing with civil matters. Officers were often unaware of ways in which building and health codes could be used to facilitate
cleaning up bad buildings, and in the past they had to go downtown to the corporation counsel’s office to initiate civil actions. Under the pilot program, the corporation counsel came to the officers, on the officers’ time and turf. When beat officers identified problem properties, the attorneys assisted them in assembling evidence to build cases against owners or managers of the buildings. Other district officers assisted in gathering evidence, and the department’s crime-mapping system could be used to document the extent of problems in and around the buildings. The attorneys helped train district officers about the new program and attended beat community meetings to respond to inquiries. Keeping residents informed of the status of buildings on the list was the routine responsibility of beat team members. The attorneys provided district commanders with monthly reports about the status of cases in the system. The commanders were charged with ensuring that their officers got involved in the program. City attorneys in a prosecution unit downtown issued violation notices and brought cases before the Code Enforcement Bureau when property owners failed to comply. They also brought actions in a special branch of Building Court and coordinated the appearance of officers when they needed to be involved in the proceedings.

**New Roles in the Department**

In principle, community policing in Chicago was to be a departmentwide program. Rather than forming a special unit charged with being “the neighborhood police,” the city was committed to changing the entire organization. Community policing roles were to be developed for all units in the organization—detectives, plainclothes tactical squads, gang investigators and narcotics enforcement units—not just for uniformed officers working the street. However, departmentwide involvement had to wait until the program had proven itself in the patrol division. Later, some attention was given to the detective division, which was organized around large areas rather than around the small districts into which the patrol division was divided. Focus groups were held with detectives to explore the issues related to integrating them more closely with the patrol division. One goal was to increase the flow of information and coordination between detectives and beat officers. The detective division assigned “area information coordinators” to assist the districts in crime analysis. These coordinators distributed new investigative information forms providing specific details on open cases and suspects; this constituted much more information than was previously available to beat officers. In addition, the coordinators held monthly information-sharing meetings for the districts in their area. These were attended by representatives of district units, including neighborhood relations and tactical and patrol
organizational design for problem solving

officers. Those in attendance received an overview of activities and crime patterns throughout the area. In addition, the detective coordinators met regularly with another liaison group that represented beat officers. The detectives also attempted to reach out to the community. They circulated community alerts that warned residents about significant crimes. These were created in response to furor over the suppression of information about a serial killer who stalked one of our study districts for more than a year. Alerts were distributed at beat meetings, and at businesses and community centers. Other units began to share information as well. In some districts, gang and tactical officers (who reported to the district commanders) attended beat team meetings and appeared at beat community meetings when there were matters of concern for them to address.

However, this did not represent heavy involvement after years of talk about making problem solving the job of everyone in the department. Detectives were clever and resisted involvement by moving at a glacial pace while mouthing enthusiasm for the project. Narcotics was another centralized unit that managed to remain aloof. There was more success in integrating the work of plainclothes tactical officers and gang units, but they were already under the direct control of district commanders. In many districts they were given special beat responsibilities and attended beat team meetings. Beat officers could requisition the assistance of other units using an intradepartmental request form, but the form had to percolate up three levels in the patrol division and then back down again in the other unit. This was supposed to take only 10 days, but in most districts it was hardly ever used.

Conclusion

Chicago developed its problem-solving program in a few experimental districts. There were only five of these, so it could be managed on an ad hoc basis. Extra officers could be assigned to deal with new tasks, and implementation issues could be dealt with directly by the department’s senior managers. However, when the program expanded to encompass the entire city, the organization itself had to change. Structural changes came first. The patrol force was reorganized to accommodate beat integrity and encourage the development of a turf orientation. Officers had to work together as a team, and sergeants had to take new responsibilities for fostering problem solving. They all had to begin working more closely with the public, taking residents’ priorities and potential contributions seriously when making their plans. Because they were going to be called upon to deal with a much wider range of issues, the efforts of the police had to be backstopped by other city agencies that would reliably deliver support when called upon. Interagency task forces
and city attorneys were also mobilized to support the use of code enforcement and civil sanctions to deal with non-criminal matters. After reorganization, the next issue on the agenda was education. Beat team officers had to learn their new roles, as did their supervisors and managers, so they all had to go back to school. The contributions of the public also fell short of expectations, and it became apparent that residents also had to learn more about the new mission of the police department and be encouraged to get involved. The next chapter describes how both police and the public were trained in problem solving.
Training was one of the most important steps toward making problem solving the operative model for police and the community. Chicago’s new approach to policing called for both to take on new responsibilities, but without training each group would inevitably fall back to what it knew best. For the police, this would mean arresting people, issuing citations or warning teens to move on. For the community it would mean calling 911 and handing over responsibility for neighborhood conditions to the police. Neither side would have thought of this as a “partnership.” But the architects of the new program realized their vision required a new foundation. The police superintendent described the new program this way:

These new approaches must be built on a stronger partnership between the police and the community. Under this new alliance, both partners must share responsibility for identifying and solving problems. Just as the public empowers government through the democratic process, government (through the Police Department) must empower the community by getting them actively involved in the job of creating and maintaining neighborhood order. The police cannot be everywhere, but the community can. Together, then, we can improve the quality of life and reduce the level of fear in our neighborhoods (Rodriguez, 1993: 10).

So, beginning in the winter of 1995, Chicago embarked on a massive training effort. First, all of the officers who served in the districts and would have direct responsibility for problem solving and working with the community were trained in this new department strategy. Their two-day training sessions were offered around the clock, six days a week, for months. Then, almost 12,000 neighborhood residents were trained in their roles by attending four...
Training for Police and the Community

The results of both training efforts were mixed. On the positive side, an enormous number of police and residents received some instruction. Though quality varied, most training was conducted professionally, and the curriculum and materials prepared for the trainees were well-conceived and to the point, making problem-solving policing seem a practical model for the city. On the negative side, both groups needed more training than they initially received as well as follow-up instruction later, but not much was available. Police officers got no more than their two days of instruction. From then on, only their supervisors received any reinforcement, and the department depended on managers to pass on new knowledge to their subordinates. As we shall see in Chapter 7, not much was passed on. A small band of trainers continued to be involved in supporting problem-solving efforts by community members, but given the scale of the city, the overall impact could only be slight.

Training the Police

All Chicago police officers with district assignments went through problem-solving training during the spring of 1995. A planning committee, composed of representatives of the research and development unit, the mayor’s office, a nonprofit group experienced in community organizing and several police training consultants, developed the curriculum. The committee also appointed the trainers, who were chosen for their teaching ability, past job performance and enlightened attitude about community policing. The 28 trainers were patrol officers, and six sergeants supervised day-to-day training operations. Trainers spent eight weeks in preparation, focusing on the main elements of the course—curriculum materials and a “survival” exercise developed for the training. Other components of trainers’ preparation were a review of instructional methods, practice teaching (some of which was videotaped) and visits to prototype districts to observe community policing in action.

Police training was held Mondays through Saturdays, and officers were trained during their regular watch. Three sites were identified where training could be conducted around the clock. Two city colleges were used for training officers assigned to day and early evening (second and third) watches. The third location, the police training academy, was filled with rookie candidates during the day, thus it was used only at night for training officers serving on the first watch. Both trainers and trainees reacted more positively to the city college sites, for participants were allowed to wear civilian clothes there and the atmosphere was more relaxed than at the rather hide-bound academy. An
average of 32 officers were scheduled for each class, allowing each district to send only two or three officers per watch to training each day. Thereby, normal operations were uninterrupted. Over a five-month period nearly 7,500 officers were moved through training at these three sites.

The evaluation team tracked this training effort in several ways. Staff members directly observed training sessions, taking notes using an open-ended outline that structured observations. Each evaluator monitored most of the trainers at least once and sat through complete two-day training sessions during each of the three watches. Staffers attended a total of 20 days of training during the first three months of the project. They noted the setting and content of the training as well as trainers’ and trainees’ behavior. In addition, 7,286 trainees completed our questionnaire, which was administered at the beginning of each training session. The questionnaire asked officers about job satisfaction; how they spent their time; their supervisors’ roles; their impressions of the public’s opinions about crime and the police; and their reactions to the department’s new community-policing model. Demographic information about those completing the questionnaire was also gathered. Though administered at training, the survey’s goal was not to evaluate the impact of training; its purpose was to assess the officers’ views as the city began implementing problem-solving policing on a citywide basis. Feedback on the impact of training was sought through in-depth interviews subsequently conducted with small samples of trainees, trainers and supervisors. Trainees were interviewed at their district stations about the effectiveness of the instructors and materials as well as about the apparent usefulness of the training they had recently completed. Trainers and supervisors were polled about their roles in training as well as about their opinions of the curriculum and training materials. In addition trainers were requested to evaluate their own effectiveness and trainees’ receptiveness to the material.

**Officers’ Training Program**

Training sessions usually were taught by a team consisting of two officers and a sergeant. Trainers had instructional videos, posters, exercise booklets, handouts, flip charts and overheads. Among the videos was a vintage recruiting film entitled “Crime Fighters 1937,” which now seems like a caricature of the traditional model of policing. A department-produced video, “Cops Talk CAPS,” featured Chicago police officers from the prototype districts talking about their experiences in the newly launched program. Another presented clips from obviously staged community beat meetings, and the final video demonstrated the department’s computerized information and crime-mapping system.

Patrol officers were the actual trainers: they presented the material, answered questions and facilitated classroom discussion. Sergeants functioned
as administrators, supervising instructors and serving as classroom disciplinarians. Their presence at every session represented the department’s traditional supervisory style, where the role of a sergeant was to make sure that everything went by the book. One sergeant noted,

I was . . . there for ensuring that trainers taught the key elements, that the facts presented were accurate; for maintaining a learning atmosphere; and for scheduling instructors and evaluating their performance.

The two-day course consisted of an introductory segment and the following seven modules:

1. Key Elements of Community Policing. This unit explained the department’s rationale for adopting community policing and the problem-solving model; the concepts of beat integrity, partnerships and problem solving through teamwork; and the new process for enlisting the aid of city service agencies.

2. Survival Exercise. This segment, which emphasized group interaction and communication skills, gave participants experience in teamwork while helping them understand the value of a rational approach to problem solving. Groups of five or six officers from different districts were asked to imagine themselves in the life-threatening scenario of being stranded in one of four locales: a desert, jungle, arctic or mountain setting. Teams were given a short list of supplies they would have, and they were asked to develop a survival strategy that prioritized their planned actions. This training component was cited most often by participants as the one that really drove home an understanding of their roles as problem solvers in community policing. As one officer explained, “[The survival exercise] made me think about priorities. It makes you think about different answers. There’s no one set right or wrong.”

3. Teamwork. This module addressed what makes an effective team, how to use the daily watch assignment record to pass information between watches and time management.

4. Problem-Solving Model. This section began the second day’s instruction and covered the definition of a “problem,” the concept and application of the “crime triangle” and the importance of conducting analysis and developing strategy before taking action.

5. Problem-Solving Exercise. During this lengthy segment trainees learned to identify and prioritize problems and to apply the problem-solving model by examining a real-life crime situation.

6. Beat Plan and Beat Team Meetings. In this session officers learned the process of beat-plan development, ways to document problem-solving activities
and procedures for completing and maintaining paperwork. Beat plan review and updating at the monthly team meeting was also covered.

7. Working with the Community. This segment addressed the community’s role in each of the five steps of the problem-solving process and methods for running effective beat community meetings.

Upon completion of the seven modules, a wrap-up segment was held in which instructors described the soon-to-be-held resident-training program. Trainers also administered an exam and course evaluation form. Participants left with a binder containing a workbook, training bulletins and other resources.

What Worked and What Didn’t

The most successful training sessions were ones in which a positive atmosphere was established and trainers’ expectations about how the class would be conducted were made clear at the outset. Effective sessions were also those in which trainers spoke naturally, taught interactively rather than simply reading from the instructor’s manual and took control of the class to keep it moving. In less successful classes, trainers lost control as disruptive trainees sidetracked the training. Our observers noted:

The training turned into a gripe session, and the trainers lost control. They didn’t know where to draw the line between letting the trainees vent and allowing them to take over the class. I suspect they may have had trouble acting as authority figures with some of their co-workers.

Clearly there was a “mob mentality” in the class described above. Once a few gripes were aired, the negativism was infectious. Present at that session were eight trainees from prototype districts—officers with practical experience who might have spoken about their positive experiences—but not one allied himself with the trainers. In fact, many were among the loudest protesters.

Successful trainers needed to have internalized the department’s new philosophy. In the face of hostility to their message, some trainers reaffirmed their solidarity with their peers and joined in denigrating the effort by disowning the program or making it clear that they were just there teaching what they were told to. According to observers’ notes:

[Trainers in one class] appeared to act more like peers than trainers. Many of the topics were presented using words like “supposed to,” and they said on many occasions that they were only here to provide the class with the information.
In another class, trainers seemed to just want to get it all over with as easily as possible without having any hostility directed toward them.

Trainers able to affirm that problem solving worked because they had seen its benefits found it easier to deal with skeptics. Police are practical people, not much given to theorizing or abstract concepts. They are not reticent to voice skepticism if they have not experienced the cause-and-effect postulated by a new program. Trainers who had served in a prototype district and had some experience with this new policing model found their first-hand knowledge to be a handy source of legitimacy:

At the outset, I elaborated on my experience with CAPS so they knew that I worked on a tough beat and had organized a lot of problem-solving activities. There was no room for them to challenge me after that.

Trainers who did not appear to have hands-on experience found problem-solving concepts harder to sell. According to an officer attending one session,

There was one girl who probably had a year or less on the job. Some guys resent someone like this telling you what to do on the job; there’s a little animosity there. You’ve gotta have street experience to learn how things are gonna work. It doesn’t always work on the streets the way it works in the books.

Fortunately, some of the officers in that training session had served in a prototype district, and some did speak up about particular issues, to the relief of at least one trainer:

They were able to validate what I was saying—that it was actually happening. I think it helped a great deal. For the most part, it was helpful because I could count on them to help me explain how things worked, so the information didn’t always have to be coming from the instructor. They would share their experiences, and it wasn’t a rehearsed response, so that was good for the audience. I tried to call on those who I knew to be good beat officers.

But in this setting it could be difficult to stand up to a skeptical band of fellow officers. Sometimes officers from the prototype districts remained silent.

It should have made a bigger difference than it did. Police officers didn’t want to share their positive experiences—admit it worked—because of peer pressure.

While the sergeants could see to it that everyone sat in attendance, there was surely no way for them to compel trainees to pay attention. An
instructional innovation was introduced during this round of training to address this: a post-test for trainees. The penalty for failing the final exam was particularly irksome—retaking the two-day training. Not many failed, but the test was a first for the department’s in-service training program, and it succeeded in making its point.

**Lessons for Problem Solving**

By spring 1995, virtually all uniformed officers who would be serving as members of beat teams, rapid response units and other teams working at the district level had received their quota of training. Most instructors felt quite proud of their effort and that they had successfully connected with the officers in their classrooms. One of them noted,

> I feel like I’ve stimulated new growth in these people. For a long time they’ve been cattle. Now, the police department is giving them the resources to do a good job. Eighty-five percent of the people who went through our classes left feeling positive, comfortable and more receptive to the CAPS program.

Another reported, “After every class someone told us we changed their mind and they’d give it a chance.”

Most trainees were attentive and cooperative. They all appeared to understand the material, and the majority participated willingly in exercises and discussions. Observers’ notes included the following:

The trainees seemed intelligent and open to change. Also, they appeared convinced of the reality of CAPS. They approached the training with the attitude that they would be using the information in their jobs and were eager to do it right. Everyone in the class contributed at least once in the two days.

The class was generally upbeat from beginning to end. They openly expressed their concerns but didn’t harp on their own individual points. They appeared to be more interested in getting the information than they were in making a statement. Most of the officers were very serious about the training. This was apparent in their actions during the exercises. There was a lot of discussion, teamwork and camaraderie.

Our training session observations not only told us something about teaching officers in problem solving, but it also highlighted some larger issues affecting the city’s ability to implement problem-oriented policing. Of great import was the attitude of many police officers toward the new model—their obvious contention that problem-solving policing conflicted with their definition of
“real police work.” Many officers’ attitudes toward the community were important as well, for frequently these views were not very positive. And a significant number of officers perceived that organizational issues would stand in the way of change.

Survey Findings

Views of the Job. Most training participants appeared to be satisfied with the job they were already doing and were not inclined to think their job description needed updating. In our survey of officers, large majorities agreed or agreed strongly with statements like, “I like the kind of work I do very much” (74 percent). Almost 60 percent endorsed the statement, “I enjoy nearly all the things I do on my job.” While officers were unhappy about some aspects of their duties (see below), work they were accustomed to doing on the street was not the problem. This did not lead them to quickly endorse changing it.

CAPS is campaign bullshit. If people stayed in jail, we wouldn’t have to do anything. Why do we have to change?

It seems like they want us to be more social workers now. Law enforcement should be their priority. I don’t see how we can change people that drastically. It has to start with the babies—in the home and the school. Now it’s all being thrown on the police department.

The way society is going with lawsuits, that’s a major factor in this CAPS thing. The police can’t go out and kick ass any more. There’s more violent crime because the police aren’t allowed to do their job.

Their views were aptly expressed by an officer who contacted us after one of our reports was described in the newspapers. “Why can’t they just let us do what we signed up for?” she lamented.

Many trainees were not particularly receptive to new procedures in the department, including the completion and submission of new city service request forms. Skeptics tried to blame this new procedure and its attendant paperwork on city workers who failed to perform their jobs. Their views on this were recorded by observers:

Why must city services be coordinated through the police department? Why don’t we attack the services who are doing nothing?

Where’s the ward [service] superintendent? We should be out looking for the bad guys, not potholes. The city should be looking out for that.
There was resentment toward other city departments. Sometimes this was the result of unresponsiveness to police officers’ requests for assistance in the past, especially requests for tow trucks and help from social-service agencies in dealing with rape victims and homeless people. But transcending all of this was the fact that officers simply defined their role quite narrowly. The survey indicated that only 26 percent of officers responding thought they should get involved in “solving non-crime problems.” Their remarks during training indicated many felt that residents already called the police too frequently about situations that should be dealt with by someone else.

**Officers’ Views of the Community.** The officer survey revealed that only 13 percent of participants felt that “the relationship between the police and the people of this city is very good.” Numerous comments made during training sessions and in personal interviews reinforced this finding. Especially in poorer districts, police officers thought citizens viewed them unfavorably, and they, in turn, regarded citizens they dealt with negatively. They commented:

- This area is such an anti-police area, it’s hard to believe they would get into a different idea of what policing is.

- Police officers get accused of things they didn’t do, like beating people. The department’s on you; the media’s on you. The general public has no idea what cops are up against. With CAPS, they think your job’s gonna be harder, but nothing’s gonna change for you.

- Officers thought that community policing might work in some places—mostly those that needed it the least—and that it would not work in others.

- From what I’ve seen already, I think it will work in nice, upscale neighborhoods where people are concerned about their property. It’s gonna be a harder sell in neighborhoods like Humboldt Park, because I don’t think people are gonna participate. I firmly believe they’re not gonna want it. There are families who depend on their family members selling drugs for a living. Mama’s sitting in the living room waiting for her son to bring drug money up from the corner.

- While many officers did not believe this to be true everywhere, it was a widely held belief that community policing was going to be a hard sell in a lot of neighborhoods. Some officers attributed their negativity about the community to the daily rigors of police work, and others to fact that some police officers live in insular neighborhoods, far removed from many of the problems they see during their workday:
The police deal with all the negative aspects of the community. When I go to work, I think, “it’s another eight hours focusing on the negative aspects of the community.”

The police officer thinks of the community he works with as being substandard and anti-police. He has a negative image of the community he works in, because his experience with them has always been bad.

Many of these officers don’t give a damn about the inner city. I work and live in my district so what goes on there directly affects me and my family. Some of these officers get off work and go home to Hegewisch [a middle-class Chicago neighborhood] or some other area and tell their family how they kicked ass all day long.

These police officers felt misunderstood by the public. More than 75 percent backed the statement, “citizens do not understand the problems of the police in this city,” and 85 percent believed “most people have no idea how difficult a police officer’s job is.” About 50 percent of those surveyed endorsed the view that “most people do not respect the police;” another 23 percent took a neutral position on this statement.

This did not portend well for an organization that was supposed to become more responsive to public concerns. The city’s problem-solving model was predicated on the idea that the views of neighborhood residents would play an important role in shaping beat teams’ action plans, and that officers would respect the community’s priorities when setting their own. However, the survey highlighted the extent to which Chicago patrol officers were resistant to letting the public play an agenda-setting role. More than 70 percent thought the public’s input would generate “unreasonable demands on police by community groups” and that it would put a “greater burden on police to solve all community problems.” Experience showed that the department’s 911 dispatching process was already sending officers on far too many non-emergency calls—matters they did not consider police business. Two-thirds of those surveyed feared that the new program would “place greater citizen demands on police resources,” and for practical purposes, police were that resource. As one officer put it during training:

A lot of people think we should do everything for them. People are more demanding [since CAPS started]. They say, “This is community policing. You’re supposed to be doing this.”

**Officers’ Views of the Organization.** A recurring theme among officers skeptical about the city’s new model of policing was that the department was
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not truly supportive of it. Some believed there was division among the top brass downtown, with a significant faction opposing the idea. (They were correct.) Others believed the city would never come up with the resources needed to staff the program adequately. (They were wrong.) Many officers’ first reaction was that problem solving and community policing was just a public relations campaign or another idea from Washington.

It’s obvious this whole program is a public relations plan more than it is a police program. They want visibility and want citizens to get a sense of security. They don’t care what they do, as long as citizens think they’re doing something. They want the citizens to think they know what’s best for themselves in law enforcement, when in fact, they don’t.

I don’t think the department cares about fighting crime; they just want to appear like they’re fighting crime to appease the public. They want large numbers to show, such as the number of calls police officers are sent on. It doesn’t matter whether police officers actually do anything when they respond to a call, as long as the department has the numbers to show for it. To me it’s a typical city operation where they got some federal money they had to spend.

More importantly, officers believed that their immediate supervisors—the sergeants and lieutenants who watched over their shoulders—neither supported the program nor that their supervisors would let them carry it out. Others were dubious about whether there was sufficient organizational flexibility to make community policing work.

Sergeants undermine CAPS by constantly reassigning people. It’s intentional. Their argument is that we’re short of people.

I wanted to employ some specific crime-prevention measures, and my supervisor has forbidden me to. It’s not just that there’s a lack of support. I was actually forbidden to try to do a good job. No one ever asks for our input. They just tell us what to do.

I tried to tell the officers in training that they’ll be able to go on the radio and say, ‘I’m going down to work on a CAPS problem.” This provoked much laughter and expressions of disbelief from the class.

The problem-solving philosophy advocates encouraging officers to be creative and act autonomously, based on their understanding of local needs. However, a majority of officers believed they had very little freedom of action. In the survey, only 32 percent of officers agreed with the statement “I have much say and influence over what goes on in regard to my job,” and only 22
percent agreed with the statement, “my supervisor frequently seeks my opinion when a problem comes up involving my job environment.”

Officers often emphasized that the organization was not geared up to reward officers for doing good problem solving or even to measure whether it was being done. Only 34 percent of those surveyed indicated that their supervisor let them know how well they were performing under the current performance evaluation system. Officers were quite vocal:

This plan is never going to work for the simple fact that the department is focused on making arrests. Promotions are based on how many arrests you make. Until you start giving people praise for the job that they do under CAPS, it’s never going to change.

Our efficiency system is horrendous—outdated and outmoded. If you’re going to make the police officer responsible for a plot of land, you better come up with a system that’s relevant and responsible to reward him for what he does. The present evaluation system is ill-suited to having the police officer take ownership of his beat.

One training sergeant shared his vision of how the organization should work in order to illustrate how it did not.

I think the department and the superintendent should make good on what they’re saying is going to happen—actually giving the patrol officer the ability to go out and do problem solving and to make a decision about the problem; the ability to sit down with his supervisor [field lieutenant] and have a free flow of information; and have the officer judged by his actions in a reasonable and timely manner—in other words, in his efficiency marks.

A significant fraction of officers perceived that the department managed by fear and intimidation. In the survey, less than one quarter agreed that “our management generally treats its employees well.” One of our observers concluded:

[Trainees] obviously felt a lot of anger and resentment about the way things were going in their districts. I got the impression that many of them work in a climate of fear of retaliation by their supervisors—that more emphasis is placed on what they do wrong than what they do right.

The new management jargon that had begun to circulate in the department spoke of sergeants as “coaches and mentors” and stressed their role in supporting officers’ autonomous problem-solving efforts. But in the survey, less than one-third (29 percent) believed “if I have a suggestion for improving
my job in some way, it is easy for me to communicate my ideas to management.” Even fewer than that (18 percent) believed “this department is open to suggestions for change.” For many, the role of sergeant remained one of watching officers until they failed to go by the book and then punishing them.

The problem is, a lot of supervisors don’t reward you for the things you do, but discipline you for the things you don’t do. There’s no incentive.

Because the department has been historically punitive rather than supportive of its members, police officers don’t trust the department.

**Support for Problem Solving.** Our training participants survey shed some light on two important questions: What was the scope of support for problem solving in the department? and, Who were its biggest supporters? To determine the answers, the survey included a list of items assessing the extent to which officers agreed or disagreed with some key concepts of the problem-solving model. Some questions had to do with participants’ views of officers’ ability to carry out the new model, and some with the ability of neighborhood residents to keep up their end of the partnership.

Responses to six questions formed a useful index of respondents’ overall views about the police and problem solving. Officers were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with three statements about their relationship with the community: “Police are quite open to the opinions of citizens,” “Police will never trust citizens enough to work together effectively,” and “Department expectations of what citizens should do to solve neighborhood problems are unrealistic.” Three other statements about police were presented: “Police will be able to analyze local problems and find underlying patterns that connect them,” “Police will be able to prioritize among a broad range of local problems,” and “Police are so focused on crime and violence in the community that they will never find the time to address other concerns.” These statements were all either in favor or opposing some important concepts of the city’s new problem-solving model. Reactions to these statements were moderately correlated and together they formed a scale with a reliability of .67. Both the overall index score and responses to individual items were employed in the analyses presented here.

While there was variation among officers, none of the responses to these statements indicated majority support for this new approach to policing. Officers were more optimistic about their own capabilities than they were about the likelihood that a close liaison could be formed with the community.
About 48 percent agreed that police would be able to prioritize problems, and 47 percent that they could carry out the analysis step in the department’s problem-solving model. But only about 26 percent agreed that police would be open to citizens’ opinions, and 27 percent that the department’s expectations about citizen involvement were realistic.

There was more optimism about police trust in the public. Fully 44 percent of officers being trained disagreed with the notion that they would not trust citizens enough to work with them effectively. But not everyone saw building trust between police and the community as an easy matter. As one trainee we interviewed expressed:

Everyone in the black community is treated like they’re criminals. If [officers] see black males on a corner, the first concept in police officers’ heads is that they’re gangbangers. They might not think that maybe they’ve just come out of a gym or that they’re just getting together having a good time. That’s not only white officers, but black officers, too, because of conditioning. The CAPS program tries to have officers transcend—to put themselves in another person’s place—to try to break down prejudices and barriers that have been put in their heads throughout childhood and adulthood. At least, that’s my concept of what CAPS is.

Analysis of officers’ responses also indicated that there was substantial division among them in terms of their support for problem solving. Five factors were important. Most significantly, they were divided by race. White officers were most pessimistic about the tenets upon which problem solving is based, while African-American officers were most optimistic. Latino officers stood between the two groups on every measure. The depth of this division is illustrated by the top panel of Figure 4.1. It presents responses to four of the six survey questions, broken down by officers’ race. (Responses to the other questions were quite similar.) Officers’ views of problem solving differed greatly by race. Black officers were much more optimistic than were whites, while Latino officers stood somewhere in between on every issue. In general, African-American and white officers differed by 14 to 18 percentage points. Among whites, less than a majority endorsed even the most popular idea—that officers would be able to prioritize local problems. However, almost 60 percent of African-American officers were optimistic about this, and a majority also felt that police would be able to trust the community enough to work together. Only a small fraction of any group endorsed the idea that the police department was being realistic about citizen involvement in problem solving.

Other factors divided the police as well, of which three were demographic. Female officers were more likely than males to be optimistic about problem
Department expectations of what citizens should do to solve problems are realistic. Police will trust citizens enough to work together effectively. Police will be able to analyze local problems and find underlying patterns that connect them. Police will be able to prioritize among a broad range of local problems.

FIGURE 4.1
Police Support by Race and Age for Problem Solving
solving, and officers who had been on the job a long time were more likely to be pessimistic. The final background factor was the age at which officers had joined the force. We noted earlier one trainer’s observation that officers with limited “life experience” outside policing were more resistant to new ideas; that proposition is supported by our data. The lower panel of Figure 4.1 charts the relationship between optimism about problem solving and the age at which officers came “on the job.” The group with the longest dedication to a policing career comprised those who joined the force between ages 18 (as part of the department’s cadet program) and 22. In the middle fell those who joined later in their twenties. Finally, the group with presumably the most diverse set of career experiences was made up of those who joined the department on or after age 30. While differences among these groups were smaller than among the races, officers indicated that those who came to policing a bit later in life were more likely to be optimistic about problem solving. Still only 30 percent of them thought the department’s assumptions about the role the public would take were realistic, but majorities stood behind the ability of police to analyze and prioritize problems using the department’s new model. These differences were independent of age or length of service, and of race and gender differences as well.

The final correlate of police optimism about problem solving was their knowledge of the program. Within the survey was our own nine-item quiz to assess which officers had picked up an accurate view of the program and its requirements. The quiz included questions about problem solving, service requests, beat meetings and beat integrity. Officers who garnered a high score on the quiz were more optimistic about the program. Statistically, differences in attitude related to knowledge were second only to differences related to race, taking all factors into account simultaneously.

Was all hope lost? Apparently not, because while no specific component of the city’s new problem-solving plan got majority support at the outset, the survey hinted that it would be possible to engage officers if the program was properly framed. Officers surveyed did not believe the public to be irrelevant: Almost 90 percent agreed that “the prevention of crime is the joint responsibility of the community and the police.” They also understood the reality that police, by-and-large, rely on the public—as victims and witnesses—to identify offenders and solve crimes. Almost two-thirds agreed that “without citizen cooperation, the majority of crimes would never be solved.” They probably were thinking of the traditional police role in responding to true emergencies of all kinds when almost 85 percent agreed that “assisting citizens can be as important as enforcing the law.” And more than 75 percent endorsed the view that “police officers should work with citizens to try to solve problems in their beat.” Many officers probably could be attracted to a program that
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would help them be more effective at their traditional tasks and help support the “good people” in their beat.

**Need for Follow-up Training.** In interviews, many trainers stressed the need for continued reinforcement of the training message.

If they want to make this work, [training] has to be ongoing. In order to succeed, you have to continually remind the current officers, especially those with eight to 10 years, what his roles and responsibilities and changes to them are. I don’t know how . . . through the sergeant or roll-call training, or what. You need a constant repetition.

But the bulk of the department would not get additional training. For several years, the two-day training they received in winter and spring 1995 and some training bulletins reviewed at roll-call were the only foundation for problem solving for most Chicago police officers. There were just too many of them, and one lesson learned from this effort was that it was terribly expensive and time-consuming to train everyone. Follow-up training would be reserved for the fewer-in-number sergeants and other management personnel, because less time and effort was needed to move them through the training academy. Sergeants serving as beat team leaders received two days of training in spring 1997, with the intention of arming them with the skills needed to help their teams develop sound beat plans. Beat team leader training specifically addressed the role of beat plans as the foundation of department strategies as well as the importance of comprehensive problem analysis in the development of beat plans. The training provided practical experience in beat team meeting activities such as conducting problem analysis and brainstorming sessions, and developing beat plans.

**Training Community Residents**

When Chicago’s community policing program was introduced in five prototype areas in 1993, it quickly became apparent that residents as well as the police did not understand what was expected of them. Beat community meetings were often gripe sessions that left both police and residents frustrated. Residents most often complained about unresponsive 911 dispatchers or slow response times, and the lack of visible police patrols. When these topics were not the focus, community members simply rose, one after another, to describe individual concerns—a circumstance that came to be known as a “911 meeting.” Almost invariably residents’ proposed solution was that police “do something” about whatever problem they broached. One officer with much beat-meeting experience bemoaned, “They think we can arrest them out of every problem.” Residents had no sense of crime patterns
or of the concept of chronic problems. In addition, they had no inkling that they were supposed to be part of solutions as well as identifiers of problems. Meetings in many districts were almost all police-led and devoid of civilian leadership. To make matters worse, few featured the circulation of a sign-up sheet or a call for volunteers to step forward to take responsibility for acting on something that had come up.

Confusion about their new roles and responsibilities pointed to a need for training neighborhood residents. Because of the depth and breadth of the city’s program, a great deal of instruction would be required. As difficult as it was to develop new training materials and deliver them to 7,500 police officers, the task of developing and delivering training to diverse groups of community residents in varied languages and hundreds of different settings was even more daunting.

At about the time the police department had decided to contract out the task, they were approached with a training proposal by the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS), a non-profit organization founded in 1980 to promote community involvement in crime prevention and policing issues. CANS was a logical candidate for the job, for the organization had worked for years to promote implementation of community policing in Chicago, and in doing so had formed alliances with many of the city’s most prominent community organizations. While the city was honeycombed with local organizations and block clubs, CANS was one of the few groups that could claim citywide recognition and multi-racial participation in its programs. On the other hand, CANS had a reputation for being critical of the police and defined itself as part of the city’s “progressive” political wing. That faction was no friend of the incumbent mayor nor his allies in the city council, and the mayor was not particularly pleased when the police department chose to contract with CANS.

Joint planning for community training began in earnest in summer 1994. An oversight committee was formed to plan and supervise the process. The committee was made up of representatives of CANS, the police department and the mayor’s office. The initial schedule called for training to begin in spring 1995—just as training for police was coming to an end—and to progress through the city’s 279 police beats over the ensuing 18 months. Sessions would be conducted by two-person teams, pairing police and civilian trainers. Our evaluation of this effort began at the planning stage. Staffers attended the earliest planning and management meetings and observed the curriculum development process, and the selection and training of the trainers. Evaluators also sat in on 31 complete training sessions in 10 police districts. There they took detailed notes about the training and the participants, and assessed the quality of the final product. Questionnaires were completed by 4,600 residents
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during the first session held in each beat. Later, both police and civilian trainers were “debriefed” about their experiences. In lengthy personal interviews, trainers ventured their opinions about the administration of the project, curriculum materials and methods, effectiveness of their fellow instructors, problems they encountered and successes they registered. Finally, we conducted a four-month follow-up study of a sample of 354 attendees to investigate what they thought of training and whether they actually had gotten involved in problem solving.

The Joint Community-Policing Training Program

As was the case with police training, the team in charge of community training quickly concluded that there were no useful “off-the-shelf” training models or materials to adopt, and that a specialized curriculum needed to be created. The development process did not go smoothly. After considerable effort, the first training curriculum was piloted in early May 1995. It was then revised and used for six weeks. However, by mid-July the need to further refine both the curriculum and the training procedures was apparent. There was too much variation among the sessions and trainers, attendance was sometimes low, and there were problems scheduling the police instructors. Because police and civilians instructors had not been trained jointly, they were not entirely certain of what to expect from one another, and a lack of continuity in partner assignments compounded the pressure and caused solid working relationships between the two sides to be slow in forming. The curriculum also needed to be adapted to successfully engage residents who brought widely varying degrees of knowledge and personal experience to the training. Some were experienced community activists, others truly rookies.

The oversight committee called a halt to training until the curriculum could be revised—a task taken on by some members of the training staff, police department members and the mayor’s representative. The updated curriculum, presented to the trainers in a four-day session in October, was very specific and included instructions and forms for a training series composed of one orientation session and three subsequent problem-solving sessions. In response to suggestions, it was also more oriented toward interactive teaching and involved less lecturing. All materials were prepared in English as well as in Spanish.

The orientation session was intended to acquaint beat residents with the city’s community policing program. It was to provide citizens with basic information about how the program should work and an overview of their roles in implementing problem solving at the neighborhood level. The two-hour sessions were usually scheduled for weeknights, with occasional sessions
on Saturday mornings. After a welcome and some introductions, the curriculum featured four components:

1. What is Community Policing? This segment covered new roles and responsibilities for police and community members, and provided an overview of key organizational features of Chicago’s community policing program including beat teams; beat integrity; alternatives to 911 calls; beat meetings; computerized crime mapping; city service request forms; and the concept of problem solving.

2. The Problem-Solving Process. This segment provided a working definition of what constitutes a problem; gave attendees practice in identifying problems through a problem-solving exercise; explained ways in which to utilize the “crime triangle” discussed in Chapter 2; and familiarized the group with the five-step problem-solving process.

3. A Problem-Solving Exercise. This long segment explained the method of applying the five-step problem-solving model to a crime or disorder problem. The session concluded with a sign-up period for further problem-solving sessions.

4. Wrap-Up and Next Steps. The concluding segment reviewed problem solving; allocated time for a question-and-answer period; emphasized the importance of community involvement; and encouraged participants to attend beat meetings and problem-solving sessions, and to recruit others to attend as well.

Following the orientation session were three follow-up problem-solving sessions. These were also two hours in length, but more advanced than the orientation and featured a hands-on approach that provided participants with practical problem-solving experience. Participants were expected to have first attended the orientation, though material from earlier meetings was always recapped at the beginning of each session. The first advanced session emphasized the importance of building a sustained problem-solving capacity rooted in local groups. It also taught participants to identify and prioritize crime and neighborhood-disorder problems and to analyze those problems using actual issues on their beat. Attendees brainstormed about chronic problems in their neighborhoods and, upon reaching consensus about which problem to tackle first, they analyzed it using the crime triangle. Local police, residents, and sometimes landlords and business owners all provided complementary pieces of information, gleaned from their unique perspectives, that enhanced the analysis process. By the end of the session, participants were to have exchanged telephone numbers and taken responsibility for gathering specific information about the problem for the next session.
The second problem-solving session was designed to teach participants how to carry out the analysis step in problem solving as well as how to set goals, design strategies and then create action plans to implement those strategies. Participants were to report back on their assignments from the previous session after completing a form that detailed their activities. Again they volunteered for tasks, which could include meeting with a landlord or business owner to discuss neighbors’ concerns and offer solutions; calling a branch of city government to arrange for provision of services, such as trimming trees, erecting signs or towing cars; obtaining donors for a hot chocolate or lemonade stand designed to dissuade loiterers from frequenting their regular posts; or staffing the stand and dispensing community-policing information along with beverages to neighborhood residents.

The third problem-solving session covered the evaluation step of problem solving—reviewing strategies implemented; identifying and celebrating successes; redesigning strategies; locating additional resources; and building a sustained commitment to problem solving. This step included identifying a leader from within the group who would carry on after trainers wrapped up their work on the beat.

Recognizing that some communities needed more than four training sessions, or required advanced help on special issues, additional technical-assistance sessions were prepared for and made available to those requesting them. “Toolbox” modules—sets of specialized training segments addressing specific issues ranging from conflict resolution to effective meeting facilitation—were also planned, but they only barely materialized. Of the 15 modules planned, only one—block-club organizing—was actually delivered anywhere.

Organizing and Staffing the Project

Trainer positions were divided among police and civilians, whose work was supported by a cadre of civilian community organizers. Instructors were responsible for planning and delivering training sessions, and providing technical assistance to community groups participating in training. Civilians were recruited through newspaper ads and at local colleges, as well as through contacts by CANS staff. A considerable effort was made to hire a diverse group that was representative of Chicago’s population. All trainers resided in the city, and some had prior organizing experience. Their job description spoke of fostering development of core leadership in each community and among beat officers, and helping community members, local organizations and city agencies work with police to solve crime and disorder problems. Training for civilians consisted of attending the two-day police problem-solving course,
taught by two police trainers who would eventually be working with them. Police trainers were assigned from the pool of instructors that recently trained officers, their only additional preparation for the civilian training project being a day-long session held jointly with the civilian instructors just prior to the program start. Police trainers selected for the resident training project were not sure why they had been chosen; while some did not want the assignment at all, others who did had been passed over. Though numbers varied over time, about 14 full-time civilians and 17 full-time police trainers were usually on call.

The community organizers mentioned above were charged with working with residents and neighborhood organizations to rally participation for the orientation and problem-solving training sessions. They also were to help identify beat and district leaders, and support problem-solving efforts that emerged from the sessions. Additionally, organizers were expected to work with beat officers and trainers, and to attend and support beat community meetings as well as training sessions. There was some disagreement over the role and number of organizers to be hired. CANS was committed to hiring 50 organizers—two for each police district—but key police officials were skeptical about organizers’ contribution to training, wary about the clout that this large staff of organizers would afford CANS and worried (appropriately, it turned out) about the budget. In all, about 28 organizers were hired, and they sat through the same preparatory instruction as did the civilian trainers.

What Worked and What Didn’t

In the classroom, successes and failures looked much like those in other instructional settings. Sessions were most successful when regularly paired instructors were well-prepared and apparently confident. Interactive sessions were more effective than lectures. Instructors who were disrespectful of participants did not engage them. Also, the diversity of participants to be trained presented instructors with challenges on several different levels. Because of residents’ varying levels of experience, the training was perceived as “too elementary” for some, and too confusing for others. Some trainers were more adept than others in gauging this and adapting training materials to meet these needs. Attendees also varied greatly in the number of sessions they could participate in and the amount of time they could devote to training exercises between sessions. Linguistic diversity posed quite a challenge for instructors as well. When Chicago’s numerous cultural groups convened for problem-solving training, it became apparent that instructional materials would be needed in Chinese, Korean, Polish, Russian and Lithuanian, as well as in Spanish.
Lessons for Problem Solving

Trainers and organizers involved in the citizen training effort accomplished many of their goals. Altogether, 1,065 training events took place. These included 211 formal planning meetings, 183 orientation sessions, 528 problem-solving training sessions and 146 technical-assistance sessions. Numerous local organizing meetings were also held. CANS estimated that some 11,700 people were involved in training activities. In a follow-up study conducted four months after participants’ first orientation meeting, about 60 percent reported having attended one or more subsequent problem-solving sessions. Almost 90 percent thought the police trainers did a good job, and over 80 percent felt the same about their civilian instructors. Overall, more than 90 percent were satisfied with the orientations and training they attended.

As was the case with police training, Chicago’s community training experience also pointed to larger issues that might impact the city’s implementation of problem solving. Among these were problems that surfaced between police and civilians involved in the project, and issues that arose with the communities that were the targets of the training effort. These factors would affect the implementation of problem solving in the field, as well as in the classroom.

Culture Clashes. CANS’ origin was that of a watchdog group—one standing apart from, and casting a critical eye on, police operations. Its role in community policing had been that of a pressure group pushing a resistant department to take the concept seriously. CANS rallied support in many quarters of the community by criticizing individual police actions and attacking the department’s inaction on policy matters. These were standard tactics for a group nurtured in an Alinsky-style organizing tradition, and some staff members came to their new job as trainers with their skeptical stance intact. While police were no longer “the enemy,” CANS staffers were wary of the newly established commitment to working together. Some of the trainers’ old habits died hard. At instructional sessions we heard them announce:

“We’re training the community to put pressure on the district commander and the beat officers to get things done. We want the entire group to call [the] narcotics unit and jam up the line for an hour. This is a strategy we need to utilize. They need to hear more than one voice.”

For some, these habits spilled over into relations with their sworn training partners. Civilian trainers steadfastly protected their autonomy and were slow to defer to their police partners for fear of becoming the subordinates they suspected the police would prefer. Our observers noted:
[One] problem was the attitude of the CANS trainer. He seemed to be very competitive with the police trainer. He also wanted to make it clear to [the police trainer] that these meetings were the domain of CANS, not of the police department.

The session was choppy, largely because of the rivalry between the CANS trainer and the police trainer. I attributed it to the CANS trainer’s inability to allow the police trainer to serve with him as a partner. He wanted to control the training and was willing to do anything necessary, including denigrating the police trainer. A lot of the residents were offended.

CANS trainers made a big point of claiming their organization’s ownership of the training, believing that this—not their ties with the police department—gave them legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In our view this was true in some neighborhoods, but not in most. Some CANS trainers also felt that police did not understand the neighborhoods, despite the long-standing requirement that all Chicago police live in the city and that many worked in the neighborhoods every day. One civilian trainer noted:

I notice most of the police trainers need a little bit more awareness of community dynamics, community issues, community realities. They tend to live in good neighborhoods. Some of the communities we’re in are primarily depressed, high crime, very low income, with low housing-stock value. I think a lot of the police need to be more cognizant of that before they make their presentation to the community.

A few civilian trainers were also uncertain about some officers’ commitment to their training assignment, especially at first.

I sense that some of them view it with somewhat of a contempt, like, “We’ll put up with these community trainers now, and once this is over we’ll go back to doing what we’ve always done.” Not taking this seriously—“us” and “them”; a hesitancy to make it a true partnership.

There were also minor but nagging issues between police and civilian trainers that reflected a rather substantial cultural chasm between the two groups. Though police officers are obligated to have their firearms with them at all times, some civilians did not like the fact that the officers wore their guns to training nor what that signified about who ultimately was in charge:

I think the dynamics of carrying a loaded firearm in a room with others with no firearms sets up barriers to trust, communication and building strong relationships. Put us all in the room with loaded firearms and then see how we
interact. It gives you a sense of, “I have more control” and, “I am not to be questioned because I am the authority.”

Putting them into civilian clothes helped, but again, get rid of the firearms. I think if the police department is really sincere about partnerships, they could find a way to do this. I don’t think any of us are going to commit a crime in the middle of a training session.

Other trainers resented what they perceived to be an “us versus them” cliquishness among the police. One trainer expressed the belief that, “The police department is like a fraternity. They act like if you’re not part of it, you’re not as good as them.” During breaks trainers noted that officers distanced themselves from community participants and hung out with each other if possible. Our observers recorded:

Once again, the beat officers failed to contribute to the session. During most of the time that they were present, they basically sat talking to one another or to the trainers. They did not engage in any dialogue with the community residents. They also failed to take notes or ask questions.

Even at the top of the two organizations, cultural differences that inhibited cooperation between them emerged. Consistent with its statistical predisposition, the police department was to a significant degree concerned with moving bodies, counting heads and meeting quantitative goals. They also became concerned about the class and racial complexion of the participants and pressed us to produce reports on the match between beat demographics and the mix of participants who attended training. Conversely, CANS staff members came to the job from the world of community organizing, where five people attending an initial meeting was a splendid turnout. CANS staffers were thus were less concerned about the numbers than the “quality of the product;” they were interested in connecting with and rallying members of local block clubs, civic associations and others who were broadly networked in the community. Though training was open to all, CANS trainers’ instincts told them that residents with links to neighborhood organizations would be more likely to get involved and stay active in problem solving when the paid professionals moved on. CANS also wanted to respond to requests for more training and special tool-box sessions even after a beat was checked off the master list as “completed,” causing much dismay for the police and the mayor’s representatives, as they were desperate to push on to new beats in order to keep to the schedule.

The city’s representatives on the oversight committee had a very business-like view of the training process: put the people who knew what to do on the
job, and tell them what to do to get it done. Community organizers, by contrast, valued raising the skill level of their members by giving them hands-on experience in new things, and delighted in broad involvement in decision making. As a result, many on the city side perceived CANS’ progress on many tasks to be exceedingly slow. Those representing the city wanted curricular uniformity, which clashed with the organizers’ tradition of adapting training to residents’ level of proficiency and being flexible in response to local capacities. Like their trainers, CANS managers were determined to protect their autonomy and establish themselves as full partners in the enterprise, despite their formal position as contractors providing services for a fee. So, for example, they fought for a larger number of their representatives to serve on the oversight committee.

Unfortunately, CANS made the fundamental mistake of hiring staff and renting office space before the months-long process of curriculum and training materials development was completed. This misstep put unrelenting pressure on operations: an untested and ill-organized training effort was thrown into the field because dollars were flowing out while no one was being trained. As mentioned before, the curriculum was eventually recalled and rewritten as significant overhead expenditures continued. As the project wore on, funds were not there to train residents of all remaining beats; as a result, some had to be dropped and others were short-changed.

**Rivalry Among Organizations.** The police department chose to involve CANS as sole contractor to conduct citizen training because of its citywide contacts, but this strategy had disadvantages. Chicago is rich with community organizations and block clubs, and when CANS representatives appeared on the scene, they sometimes stepped on local toes. Groups that believed they represented their beat thought that the contracted organizers did not respect their status. The tension was palpable. Observers noted:

The community group perceives CANS as coming to remove the established leaders and put in their own leaders. It’s a fear of losing their power.

The main problem, and I think all others stem from it, was the clash between the CANS organization and established community organizations, including the police. The established community organizations saw this as a threat to their power and wouldn’t work with CANS.

Many indigenous groups did not understand why CANS was awarded a contract to organize in their community, because those already there believed themselves to have a specialized working knowledge. One alderman described to us “a long line of groups” parading into her office, with members asking why they could not get contracts to organize, too. From one of her staff member’s
the point of view, local problem-solving capacity could best be built by supporting local organizations. As a trainer described the situation in another area,

Community members already have their CAPS groups working on problems, and they’re offended. They were made to feel they weren’t doing a good job with problem solving, so CANS was brought in to show them how to do it right. Some [community members] have brought this to the attention of powerful politicians, and it’s been brought up downtown.

That was not idle chatter. In November 1995, a powerful alderman denounced the training effort in a city council meeting and threatened to organize a protest of this allocation of the city’s budget—a move prompted by organizations that felt threatened by the project and the appearance of CANS organizers on their turf.

Community policing itself can create such rivalries. In the course of the evaluation we noted that not all groups we encountered were enthusiastic about mobilizing around community policing for a variety of reasons. First, Chicago’s program threatened to upset existing organizational arrangements and spread the community’s energies more thinly across competing activities. Also, some groups already enjoyed cooperative relations with police district commanders prior to the program’s inception, so when advisory committees were formed, groups that had previously established channels for making their needs known believed the new formal mechanisms for public input offered them no advantage and threatened to undercut their special status. Indigenous organizations worried about their ability to get police officers to continue to attend their group’s meetings and about having to compete for the commander’s attention. They also disliked the fact that CAPS-related activities sometimes had the organizations vying for the attention of their active members. Additionally, indigenous organizations did not want to increase the number of meetings their members needed to attend, fearing they might be the losers in this new competition for their allegiance.

**Resident Turnout.** The training oversight committee established a goal of involving 35 resident participants per training session. To meet this goal, civilian trainers and the organizers worked to promote awareness of training among community residents and to cultivate participation in training sessions. Preparatory work varied from district to district, but citywide it included presenting brief overviews of the program at community meetings, identifying and meeting with key community organizations and leaders, holding “pre-meetings” for local groups in an effort to get them to “buy into” the training plan, and meeting with local leaders to set dates and locations for training. The actual number of participants who attended the initial orientation
sessions came close to or exceeded the 35-resident goal. Turnout was higher for north side meetings, where average attendance was 44. On the south side an average of 34 residents attended the orientation sessions. However, attendance at the ensuing problem-solving sessions fell considerably short of the target. Though the citywide average was 19, average attendance was only 16 at the 14 problem-solving sessions we observed.

Observers attributed fluctuations in attendance to factors such as weather and the convenience of event sites. Another issue was fear of involvement in neighborhoods where becoming known as a friend of the police could be dangerous to one’s well-being. One trainer argued,

> The resistance that the majority of us encountered from the community was their fear of getting involved, their fear of actually doing something against the criminal element.

Outreach activities to promote awareness of upcoming training also varied considerably from beat to beat depending on personnel involved. Some organizers, for example, were hesitant to walk around the neighborhood knocking on doors. Others lacked the foreign-language proficiency needed to bring people out in particular areas. The problem of flagging attendance after the initial orientation sessions persisted.

> We lose people in the process. There are 60 at the orientation, but only 15 at the problem-solving sessions. How do we maintain their interest and number?

Our data did indicate that CANS staffers were successful in getting people to attend orientation training in lower-income and high-crime beats, which was an important accomplishment. To determine this we statistically analyzed patterns of attendance at orientation sessions held in 181 different beats. Attendance ranged from four to 93 residents. Because the city’s police beats vary greatly in size (the adult population of these 181 beats ranged from 1,800 to almost 18,000), it was important to examine rates of attendance (per 10,000 adult residents). This gave the residents of each beat an “equal opportunity” to turn out. A comparison of these rates with demographic and crime factors indicates the kinds of beats that took best advantage of this opportunity.

Across a variety of measures, turnout rates were moderately higher in poorer and higher-crime areas of the city. Figure 4.2 illustrates two of these relationships. The top panel relates a measure of poverty (the percentage of beat families headed by women) with turnout rates; the bottom panel compares the 1995 personal crime rate for each beat to rates of involvement in training. Turnout and the poverty measure were correlated +.40, and it is apparent in Figure 4.2 that it was especially high in the upper reaches of beat
FIGURE 4.2
Correlates of Training Attendance Rates

Poverty and Training Turnout

Personal Crime and Training Turnout
poverty. The turnout rate per 10,000 adult residents averaged 26 and .52 in the 20 percent of the beats that were best-off and poorest, respectively. Turnout was related in about the same fashion to lower levels of education and income. Personal crime and turnout were correlated +.42. In this case, turnout averaged 24 per 10,000 in the lowest-crime areas, and .59 in the 20 percent of beats with the highest personal crime rate. Indicators of the most violent kinds of crime—gun crimes, street crimes, and sex offenses—were also positively related to turnout. Property crime, which is often high in better-off areas of the city as well as in poor communities, was unrelated to levels of participation. Turnout was generally lower in predominately white areas (the correlation was -.28) and higher in African-American beats (+.23). The latter was due to the higher rates of personal crime there. Turnout in African-American areas was about average when the “push” of local crime was taken into account statistically. Participation rates were lower in heavily Latino areas, and this difference persisted when other demographic features of the training beats were taken into account. There also continued to be evidence of high rates of involvement in poorer districts when the effects of all of these factors were taken into account.

While these data speak only to attendance at orientation sessions, and not to the apparent fall-off as the demands of involvement mounted, the ability of CANS to muster participation in poor and high-crime areas was a considerable accomplishment.

Representativeness. Another goal of the training program was to gain representative involvement from the city’s neighborhoods. Project leaders knew of the general tendency for voluntary, neighborhood-based programs to overrepresent older, long-term residents who owned their homes, and that in diverse neighborhoods it is usually residents from the better-off parts of the community that turn out for meetings. Our annual reports on attendance at monthly beat community meetings had already pointed to the poor representation of Latinos, renters and residents with less formal education (Skogan, et al, 1996). Publicity and training materials were prepared in several languages, and organizers were matched to beats in terms of their linguistic skills. Surveys of those who participated in training indicate that this turnout effort was to a certain extent successful, though some of the biases that almost inevitably accompany programs relying on volunteer participation affected training involvement as well.

A training participants survey helped assess the representativeness of the sessions on a beat-by-beat basis. We examined participants’ backgrounds by surveying more than 4,600 persons attending the initial orientation sessions. This enabled us to compare backgrounds of those attending training to the demographic profile of their beat as a whole. This comparison pointed to a bit
of a “middle-class bias” in volunteerism. Within beats, residents who came to training were more likely to be homeowners with more education and higher incomes than the local population. Figure 4.3 presents one example, that of the relationship between the percentage of beat residents who owned their homes and the proportion of training participants in that beat who were homeowners. This figure presents both the data points for each meeting and a regression line that describes statistically how the participant and beat demographic were related. As Figure 4.3 illustrates, in beats where about 30 percent of training participants were homeowners (on the horizontal axis), generally about 55 percent were homeowners (on the vertical axis). Similarly, where 50 percent of residents owned their homes, almost 70 percent of the trainees were homeowners.

Other factors were related to involvement in training and reflected the same pattern. Beat residents with more education were also heavily represented at the sessions. In beats where about 30 percent of residents had a high school diploma, about 75 percent of those participating had this level of education; where 70 percent had a diploma, 85 percent of those who came to training were high school graduates. College graduates were overrepresented by 10 to 15 percentage points. More affluent neighborhood residents (those making more than $40,000 per year) had a 5 to 10 percent edge, and in heterogeneous areas whites were overrepresented by about 10 percentage points. It is important to note that this does not mean the most affluent “dominated” training sessions, for these percentages are relative to the affluence and educational level of the beats, which was often very low. In poorer areas, most of those who turned out were poor.

More encouraging to training organizers was that the city’s Latino residents were better represented in training than they were in beat community meetings. Just before training began, we completed a similar study of resident involvement in beat community meetings. An analysis of those data found that Latinos were involved at a rate of only one-third to one-half their proportion in the population, and that they were the most underrepresented group (Skogan, et al., 1996). By contrast, Latinos were underrepresented in training sessions by only about 10 percentage points. Seventeen of the training beats surveyed were more than 50 percent Latino, and Latino turnout was greater than 50 percent in 13 of them. The efforts of Spanish-speaking organizers likely played a role in this, for they canvassed the areas and aggressively sought Latino participation. Besides improving the representation of Latinos in training, another benefit of this turnout is that they found themselves having positive first-hand experiences with police. The evaluation’s surveys have found that Chicago’s Latino respondents are the most dissatisfied with police service (see Skogan and Hartnett, 1997), but some of our Latino respondents
FIGURE 4.3
Training Participants and Beat Demographics
attributed their continued participation in neighborhood problem solving to their affiliation with police they came to know, respect and trust during training.

Did this differential turnout have an impact on the tenor of the training sessions or participants’ later involvement in problem solving? Some trainers noted a difference in the receptivity of different audiences. One noted,

When you work with groups that are educated in what’s going on in their beat, that helps. The more successful meetings were ones where people had a vested interest in the community and knew something about police procedures.

Training-session observers agreed: the sessions in which participants were stakeholders in the community—those who were already organized and active, knew why they were there and were comfortable with the police—were more lively and participatory. While we do not have comparable data about nonparticipants, differential turnout favoring better-off elements of the community probably created a relatively favorable venue for training.

Those who did attend, by-and-large, viewed the police and their role in problem solving quite positively. The survey of trainees included questions about the perceived ability of Chicago police to successfully carry out neighborhood problem solving and the extent to which trainees felt police would be open to, trust and rely upon citizen input in doing so. Most trainees were positive about the ability of the police to succeed, with 61 percent agreeing that “police will be able to analyze local problems and find underlying patterns that connect them.” Participants were consistently more positive than negative about the police side of police-citizen partnerships. Almost twice as many participants agreed (41 percent) than disagreed (24 percent) that “police are quite open to the opinions of citizens.” The remainder took a neutral position. Almost three times as many participants (57 percent) agreed that “police will rely on citizen input to help set priorities and do their job well” than disagreed (20 percent). Furthermore, 58 percent of participants disagreed with the statement, “police will never trust citizens enough to work together effectively,” while only 14 percent agreed.

Among attendees, positive views of the police were consistently related to the “middle-class bias” factors identified above. More-educated participants were more likely to have confidence in the police: they were more likely to believe that police would trust citizens enough to work together effectively; that police would be able to analyze local problems and discover their underlying patterns; and that police had a sense of the problem-solving role the public could play. They were also more optimistic about the role the public could play in crime prevention and problem solving, and about the public’s openness...
to the police. There were similar distinctions between poor and better-off training participants, with lower-income trainees fearing that citizens would never trust the police nor be very effective at problem solving, and that police would never trust citizens nor be very effective problem solvers. Latinos were most pessimistic about the potential for cultivating a trust between police and the public and for police being open to citizen input when setting priorities; however, the impact of Latinos’ negativity was somewhat diminished by their underrepresentation by 10 percentage points.

Another factor related to participants’ attitudes was their prior involvement in beat community meetings. The average trainee had been to almost three beat meetings in the previous year, and the more meetings they attended, the more optimistic participants were about both police and citizen commitment to joint problem solving. Differences in attitudes related to beat-meeting involvement were strongest regarding views of police—particularly about police openness to citizen opinions and the extent to which police would rely on citizen input to set priorities. There could be several reasons for this. Having attended a few beat community meetings may have reinforced optimism or led participants to become more optimistic as a result of what they experienced and the contacts with police they had developed. At the same time, those who had bad experiences at beat community meetings probably were less likely to turn out to training sessions at all, weeding out those with more negative views.

**Community Involvement in Problem Solving.** The ultimate training goal was to get community residents involved in all aspects of problem solving, ranging from identifying problems to evaluating how well strategies actually worked. The concepts were new. Trainees all over the city struggled with the idea that a “problem” was a chronic condition, and that they had to transcend their own experience to identify one. The idea that they—residents—needed to be part of the solution was also new for many. They were more accustomed to a police department that told them to simply call 911 to have a car sent to deal with their concerns.

One factor that doubtless affected participation in partnerships was past experience with the police, which was highly variable from beat to beat. In one area, a trainer reported:

> They don’t see how the training will really change things because they don’t think the police will change, and they don’t feel they’ve got an appropriate level of police response in their neighborhood. There’s venting about past incidents. I think we’ll continue to encounter it because it’s the first opportunity that people get to open up with the police or about the police.
In some areas, people were simply afraid of being identified as getting involved with the police. One resident noted that when calling the police, "... they always ask where you are. Giving your name can be hazardous to your health." Another said that, to his dismay, when the police came they rang his doorbell and thus identified him.

Throughout the training process, CANS continued to stress the importance of involving residents who were already active in civic associations or block clubs, arguing that they were the most likely to follow through and actually get involved in problem solving once training was complete. We examined this view in two sets of data collection that took place to evaluate the program.

The first set was the survey distributed to participants during the first day of training. Although we lack comparative data on nonparticipants, the high level of local involvement by those who came to training suggests this was an important factor stimulating attendance. Fully 65 percent of those who came to training were involved in community groups, and most were involved in more than one. In total, 23 percent of trainees reported they were involved in a block club, 18 percent in a neighborhood watch group, 34 percent in a local church or synagogue, 9 percent in a business group, 15 percent in a service organization and 33 percent in some other community group. In turn, being involved was linked to optimism about the city’s new problem-solving model for policing. Among those who attended, residents reporting organizational connections were more optimistic about neighborhood problem solving, and they were particularly optimistic about roles for the public in the program. The more involved they were in the organizational life of the community, the more likely trainees were to believe that citizens can analyze problems, prioritize them and derive solutions. Trainees were particularly optimistic about the kinds of efforts that organizations could encourage: citizens training one another in problem solving, and getting others to attend beat community meetings. Trainees who were already involved in community organizations were also more optimistic about the ability of ordinary citizens aiding in crime prevention.

In the ensuing months we also conducted a follow-up survey of a sample of 354 trainees to track their subsequent involvement in actually tackling neighborhood problems. The follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone four months after orientation sessions. Respondents were sampled from the initial questionnaires so their answers could be linked to their pre-training views. Each respondent was asked to identify the most important problems affecting his or her own neighborhood, and we recorded the top three. In follow-up questions about each problem, respondents were asked if they had gotten involved in trying to solve the problem. The survey found that they were heavily involved in problem-solving efforts. Former trainees
reported they tried to do something about 63 percent of the neighborhood problems they had identified. Long-term and higher-income residents were more likely to report problem-solving efforts, and Latinos were less likely to get involved. However, the most important factor distinguishing trainees who had and had not taken action was their involvement in community organizations: the more involved they had been when they attended training, the more they did later on. Among those who reported in the orientation questionnaire that they belonged to no community organizations, 48 percent indicated that they tried to solve one or more problems. If they had listed involvement in one, two or three organizations, they tried to solve problems 63 percent of the time. If they were affiliated with four or more organizations (as were 15 percent of those interviewed), they tried to solve problems 80 percent of the time. The survey also revealed that trainees who were more involved in the organizational life of their community were also more likely to go to beat meetings and to have attended other kinds of police-related events as well.

The training also was intended to be “capacity-building.” That is, participants were expected to later share the problem-solving skills they acquired with other residents. As a result of training, it was hoped that communities would be capable of mobilizing and training additional residents— independent of CANS or the police department. The follow-up interviews pointed to some successes along these lines, albeit only during the four months immediately following training. During that period, 70 percent reported that they had urged others to attend training sessions, and 74 percent had urged people to attend beat meetings. Furthermore, 63 percent reported that they had tried to teach other residents something about problem solving; among this group the median was five other residents. Sixty-eight percent reported attending one or more beat meetings since they had been trained. As with problem solving, those who were more involved in community groups were more likely to have tried to “pass on the message.”

These were important findings, for from the outset of the project there had been a debate about the appropriate audience for training. While the police department was committed to making the instruction widely and uniformly available to all residents, CANS felt strongly that successful training and the likelihood of gaining sustained involvement from community participants was dependent on targeting members of community organizations or activists in other community networks. In terms of the “bottom line”—involvement in problem solving and capacity building—those individuals were indeed more productive. But ironically, CANS’ competition for the time and energy of these local activists potentially threatened existing local organizations, many of
which also needed the commitment of their members and felt undermined when their energies were siphoned off for other activities.

The Fate of Resident Training

Chicago’s commitment to resident training was one of the early distinguishing features of its problem-solving program. But as the original training project approached completion at the end of 1996, the mayor’s unhappiness with rumors of slipping schedules and CANS’ managerial style signaled that a new training structure was required. At one point the training project’s budget was cut, rescued only when a quasi-independent city board voted to supplement its funding on a temporary basis from a federal Community Development Block Grant. When the original training contract ended, the training effort was reorganized, and operations shifted to the police training academy. All but one of the academy hires—seven civilian and seven primary police trainers—were drawn from the original training staff; the one new trainer was hired because she spoke Polish, the most-requested foreign language after Spanish. Training teams were assigned to specific areas of the city and were to operate flexibly in response to training needs identified in each. Their first step was to meet with district commanders, at sessions often attended by other district managers and neighborhood relations sergeants. Consultations like these facilitated gathering information and identifying beats for training. The teams then developed needs assessments for each beat and tailored their training efforts to meet those needs. Teams were to conduct training for beat officers as well as for civilians, when requested. They planned to provide training in cooperation with community organizations and block clubs, and to target individuals who were already affiliated with organizations.

The organizing component of citizen training eventually became the domain of the CAPS Implementation Office, a part of city hall. It deployed outreach workers for education and mobilization projects as well as service coordinators acting as liaisons between city departments and district activists. The implementation office also had a substantial marketing budget and developed an array of multilingual educational materials. At first the office primarily focused on spreading the word about the program. Because that campaign proved quite successful, the implementation office redirected its resources toward rallying attendance at community policing functions and community meetings.
Conclusion

Citizen training was intended to “jump start” problem solving in Chicago’s neighborhoods. Over about 18 months, more than 7,500 police officers and 11,500 residents attended training sessions before going forth to carry out the city’s new program. These numbers are evidence that this was a significant effort; the fact that professionally conducted training was so rapidly developed and conducted on this scale was in itself an accomplishment. However, the training process also illuminated issues that would slow the actual adoption of problem solving by both police and neighborhood residents.

On the police side, officers’ views signaled implementation problems. Many officers were not particularly interested in getting involved in non-crime problems and clung instead to a very traditional view of their job. To them, problem solving did not look much like “real police work.” In addition, many officers believed they were misunderstood by the community and distrusted in poor and minority areas. In their view, partnerships with the public might work in better-off neighborhoods where residents already got along with the police, but not where they were needed most. A significant number of officers perceived organizational issues standing in the way of change. They were rightly concerned about the lack of a correspondence between what they were being told to do in problem-solving class and the standards by which their bosses evaluated their performance each year. They feared that staff at the 911 center would not dispatch beat teams and rapid response units according to the newly created policy—another concern that was well-founded. Officers rightly perceived division among top managers downtown regarding whether the entire community policing venture was a good idea. They chafed under the traditional control of their sergeants, who they perceived—often correctly—did not understand the program very well and shared the view of many that it was not a good idea. In this atmosphere, problem solving was a tough sell, and it was remarkable how calmly and professionally it was usually received.

On the civilian side, the training experience also pointed to issues affecting the ability of a city to implement its problem-solving model. Even in the relatively sophisticated realm of the trainers themselves there were culture clashes that spread ill feeling among both police and their civilian partners. The political and organizational goals of the contracted civilian trainers and the police department did not always point training in the same direction, which threatened to undermine the credibility of the project’s management. It was difficult to recruit for training and particularly hard to get them to come back again and again, as the training model (and eventually, problem solving) demanded. In the plus column, turnout was relatively strong in higher-crime
Training for Police and the Community

and poorer areas. Organizers and trainers did a better job than many expected in turning out a representative cross-section of the community for training, although the middle-class bias seemingly inherent among civic activists remained a potent factor. The backlash from other community groups that were jealous of the advantages accruing from CANS' large city contract or threatened by the competition that community policing introduced for attention from the community demonstrated that not everyone experienced the benefits of the new paradigm in the police department. These factors would affect implementation of problem solving in the field, as well as in the classroom.

A comparison of the views of both sides suggests that at the beginning the community was much more ready to go about the task of problem solving than were the police. Table 4.1 presents the results of parallel questions asked of residents and police officers as they began training during 1995 and 1996.

**TABLE 4.1**
Attitudes of Residents and Police About Problem Solving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>percent agree or agree very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>police officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police open to citizen opinions</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens open to police opinions</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police trust citizens enough to work together effectively</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens trust police enough to work together effectively</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police will rely on citizen input to set priorities</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens will take responsibility for neighborhood safety</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Number of cases) (7286) (4607)

NOTE: officer survey conducted spring 1995; trainee survey conducted fall-spring 1995-1996. “—” indicates a comparable question was not asked.
Each group was asked questions about the readiness of both police and the community for problem-solving partnerships. As illustrated at the top of Table 4.1, each was asked how open police and citizens were to the opinions of the other group in the context of neighborhood problem solving. Residents were more than twice as optimistic about their own openness than police were about their new civilian partners (42 versus 19 percent). Residents were also more optimistic about police than the police were. (Forty-one versus 26 percent thought police would be open to residents’ opinions.) Residents beginning training were also more likely to trust the police than police thought them to be (53 compared to 38 percent), and more citizens thought the police trusted them than the police actually reported (58 versus 44 percent). And although police were not asked parallel questions, those enrolled in resident training were quite optimistic about the extent to which police would take residents’ views into account when setting priorities (57 percent believed they would), and that their neighbors would take responsibility for neighborhood safety (68 percent thought they would).
By the end of 1995, Chicago was committed to citywide adoption of a problem-solving orientation and to involving neighborhood residents as partners in that venture. We had seen what the city’s problem-solving model looked like, the ways in which the police department was reorganized to support it, and how officers and residents were trained to use the problem-solving approach. Our next step was to document the extent to which police and neighborhood residents were actually practicing, perhaps in partnership, elements of the problem-solving model. This was done by observing actual practice in the field, for none of the department’s own indicators of what officers were doing even touched on the issue.

So, during 1996 and 1997 we examined first-hand the activities of police and residents in a small number of beats to see how closely they were hewing to the department’s model and to identify factors that seemed to explain why some areas were more successful than others in making problem solving work. This chapter sets the stage for addressing the question of whether any problem solving was going on and examines a range of problems in a cross-section of the city’s neighborhoods.

Fifteen beats were selected on the basis of census and geographical factors for detailed examination. They represented many of the conditions and lifestyles that are common in Chicago. The beats ranged from quite well off to very poor; some were racially homogeneous, while others were home to diverse groups of neighbors. Of course this small set of areas could not constitute a representative “sample” of the city’s 279 beats. In fact, we deliberately avoided selecting many beats from the relatively well-off, home-owning, often racially homogeneous parts of the city in order to focus on places facing real problems. We also avoided beats with heavy concentrations of public housing, because the city’s housing authority had its own police department and a distinctive set of problems that might not apply elsewhere.
Once the study beats were identified, a great deal of qualitative and quantitative data was assembled to describe what was taking place in those areas. Five field observers worked on the project, with each responsible for three beats. Observers inventoried each beat to identify key features, including the housing, shopping, services, facilities and amenities that characterized each. They drove the streets to observe what was taking place and rode with police officers to quiz them about specific sites and gather their impressions of conditions and events. They also examined resource files on each beat found in police district stations and in officers’ beat planners. These files documented key problems, such as gangs active in the area, and resources, such as school contacts, that officers had identified to help deal with problems. Our observers interviewed beat officers and their supervising sergeants, neighborhood relations personnel, and district managers and commanders. They also attended meetings of beat team officers. The districts had just produced their first formal problem-solving plans, and our observers also sat in on day-long meetings between top police administrators and each district management team when they discussed and prepared to revise their plans. These sessions gave us valuable insights into how they envisioned problem-solving policing.

Views and experiences of the general public were represented in this study as well. Personal interviews were conducted with: community activists and organization leaders; members of the district advisory committees and their subcommittees; and aldermen and city employees assigned to the area. The interviews examined ways in which problems were being addressed on their various beats and what the community’s role in policing had been. We also observed many of these individuals in action at more than 50 committee meetings and community gatherings. Staff members sat in on 81 beat community meetings—gatherings that were held almost every month in each beat—and in April of 1997 staffers gathered questionnaire data from 280 of the residents who attended.

Finally, beginning in January 1997 a survey was conducted in 12 of the beats—a number determined by the size of our budget. Households were randomly selected for inclusion from the telephone directory, and in each an adult respondent was chosen at random. A total of 1,290 households were surveyed, including at least 100 in each of the 12 beats. The response rate for the survey ranged from 73 to 82 percent and was 78 percent overall. Interviews were conducted both in English and Spanish; households where no one spoke either language were excluded. This was the case in 3.6 percent of the households reached, constituting a serious problem in only one beat. Extensive efforts were made to interview those who were initially unwilling to cooperate with the survey, and in the end only 4 percent refused to be interviewed.
7 percent of the time interviewers reached someone who hung up without saying a word; we do not even know if they would have been eligible for inclusion in the study. Only 0.9 percent of those we called appeared to be “call screening” with the help of answering machines, and only 0.4 percent of calls reached a fax machine, perhaps because most areas called were not very affluent.

A bigger issue was that Chicagoans from less prosperous neighborhoods move frequently, and even though the directory from which the sample was selected was less than six months old, 11 percent of the numbers listed were no longer working when we called. To the extent to which those families had been replaced by others who were not yet in the directory, we failed to represent some residents of the beats. However, we were interested in interviewing respondents with experience and knowledge about their neighborhood, so we chose to drop respondents who had lived in their beats for less than six months. (Presumably many of those living in recently listed households would have failed to meet that criterion.) A comparison of respondents’ backgrounds to our best estimates of the beats’ demographic complexion suggests that the survey substantially overrepresented, by more than 10 percentage points, homeowners in two areas, and overrepresented those with a high school diploma in five. However, other research suggests that questions about crime-related neighborhood conditions are not much affected by whether survey respondents are selected from reverse directories or by more random methods when respondents all come from the same small areas (Rosenbaum and Lavrakas, 1995).

The Communities

The beat portraits presented in this section are based on our observations, the resident survey, updates on data from the 1990 census and more recent economic and social data from the Chicago Planning Department. They describe the condition of the 15 beats and provide a backdrop for understanding the varieties of policing and problem solving that we observed in action. Their locations are illustrated in Figure 5.1, which outlines each of Chicago’s 279 police beats. The police department refers to its beats by number, but to help the reader we have chosen a name for each that captures the routines of life there. These beats are not “neighborhoods” by most conventional definitions, for the police department drew its boundaries on the basis of workload and accessibility considerations rather than on any understanding of linkages among residents. As we will see, this worked to the disadvantage of some residents as they struggled to sustain community involvement in problem solving.
FIGURE 5.1
Problem-Solving Study Areas

Property Values
Solid Mix
Potpourri
Stir Fry
Norte
Rebuilding
Fiesta
Inner City
Old Guard
Pride
Blue Collars
Bungalow Belt
Middle Classes
Souhtown
Three Predominately Latino Beats

The three predominately Latino beats in our study shared a great deal in common, including poverty and isolation from the wider community. Based on family income, these beats were among the poorest 25 percent of the city’s 279 beats. Between 20 and 30 percent of households received public assistance and only 30 to 40 percent of those living in these areas had a high school diploma. Between a quarter and a third of residents were classed as “linguistically isolated” by the Census Bureau, meaning that neither they nor anyone in their household spoke English. Half or more of households did not have cars (the comparable national figure is 8 percent), and a quarter did not have phones. Each of the predominately Latino beats was densely populated, and homes and apartments were packed with large families.

Fiesta was a vibrant, thriving community, almost entirely Mexican in character. Storefronts lining the commercial strip were always open, and shopkeepers greeted their customers in rapid-fire Spanish. It was visually chaotic: graffiti coexisted with colorful murals, and piles of trash with bustling sidewalks. The architectural style of the area is best described as a hodgepodge; shops had apartments on upper floors, and small corner markets (too many of which sold alcohol, according to some residents) were scattered throughout the area. Many homes were made of wood (not the norm in Chicago) and tightly packed on small lots. There were few multi-unit apartment buildings, but the area remained very dense because families were large and many bigger houses were cut up into numerous small units. Trash and junk could be seen everywhere, adding to the run-down appearance of the beat. Cafes and galleries catering to struggling artists reflected the growing diversity of one end of the beat; they were there because rents were very cheap. Streets were in poor condition, with numerous pot holes. The surface elevation of the area had been raised at the turn of the century to match the city’s standard, and now the sidewalks were collapsing where they vaulted over empty space. Traffic was congested, parking limited, and delivery trucks double-parked everywhere. There was little greenery in the beat. A number of social service and nonprofit organizations providing child care, youth programs and assistance of many kinds were located in Fiesta. However, the area was ill-served by banks and well-known commercial outlets.

Norte was a predominately Puerto Rican community. It was more than 70 percent Latino, with African-Americans clustered in some numbers on the beat’s quiet southern end. Like other Latino areas, more than one-third of Norte’s residents were less than 18 years of age. Most lived in multi-unit apartment buildings. New construction in the beat was mostly commercial, although units of scattered-site public housing had been built there recently.
The beat’s few single family homes were generally well-maintained, and a number were recently renovated. Storefront churches abounded, and other churches had taken over former synagogues, so it was not unusual to see Hebrew lettering in the stonework. A busy business strip provided handy shopping, a bank and fast food. The beat was served by social agencies focusing on the needs of the Puerto Rican community and included a head start program, housing for the elderly, youth services, health clinics and an AIDS treatment center. The western third of the beat was nonresidential, divided between a large park, industry and a railroad yard. The largest institutional stakeholder in the beat was a rapidly expanding hospital that was aggressively buying up nearby land. Scattered buildings purchased by the hospital were renovated, but entire blocks immediately adjacent to the facility were leveled for parking lots and landscaped areas. In the process, several buildings that were the loci of gang and drug activities were demolished.

Two-Turf was a community divided within itself, its Spanish-speaking population divided between Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans. The area’s aggressive gangs claimed subdivisions of the beat, and a political split between the two aldermen serving the beat was reinforced by a railroad viaduct running through the area. The beat was mostly residential, and the majority of families lived in small, frame-sided houses or two-family duplexes. There were a few large and mid-sized apartment buildings, including some public and subsidized units. Some parts of the beat were well-tended, with neat, fenced-in lawns, and a grand boulevard running through the area was lined with elegant brownstones that served as a reminder of the area’s heyday. However, pockets of disrepair, piles of trash and graffiti-covered walls could be found throughout the beat. The most run-down areas tended to be those with gang problems. Like other Latino communities in Chicago, Two-Turf’s local school population was growing rapidly. In fact, many classes there were conducted in makeshift classrooms in trailers parked in schoolyards. While the beat’s residential areas were quiet during school hours, children were visible everywhere at other times of the day and night. Gang activity and street drug sales were rampant after dark, and there was frequent gang violence and retaliatory raids. Cars with dark windows sped through intersections, instilling fear of drive-by shootings. During temperate weather people spent a great deal of time outdoors, and empty liquor bottles could be seen scattered on streets and lawns. Autos parked in the area were visibly worn, and men could frequently be seen working on them at the curb. The beat’s four boundary streets were lined with small, mostly Latino-oriented businesses, including beauty parlors, small food markets, restaurants and auto repair shops. Most had a weathered appearance.
Four African-American Beats

The overwhelmingly African-American beats studied were more varied than the Latino areas, reflecting the class and lifestyle diversity of Chicago’s black communities. Residents of two study areas were extremely poor. Both beats were among the city’s poorest 20 percent. Although neither beat contained any public housing developments, one-third of families were headed by single women, and between one-third and one-half of all households received public aid. Infant mortality rates were high in both areas.

Inner City shared the fate of many African-American neighborhoods in Chicago. Once the home of a diverse black population, almost all of the area’s middle class families fled to the suburbs in the late 1970s, in search of better schools and safer, more spacious housing. A small core of longtime homeowners hung on, but it was overwhelmed by newer, more transient residents. Poverty levels had been going up while the area’s population continued to drop slowly, along with its economic prospects. The beat’s appearance varied; areas that echoed better times featured well-maintained brick single-family homes and a few newly constructed brick townhouses. The bulk of the beat’s housing, however, consisted of wooden single-family homes that had fallen into disrepair. Larger buildings were subdivided into smaller units. Two-thirds of the beat’s blocks had abandoned houses or multiple-unit buildings that were literally falling apart faster than the city’s demolition program could deal with them. Vacant lots abounded where other buildings had already been torn down. Disabled and stripped autos could be found in most streets and alleys, and in backyards. The area’s once-thriving commercial strip had dwindled to a few taverns and check-cashing, auto repair and package liquor stores. The elementary school serving the beat was one of the lowest-performing in the city and was on the board of education’s “probation list.”

Rebuilding was the poorest beat we studied, with the largest proportion (one-half) of families receiving public assistance. It had the greatest number of abandoned buildings and vacant lots of any of the study beats. The surviving housing stock was dilapidated, although many buildings showed signs of the area’s earlier grandeur. Aging commercial and industrial structures, most of which were extremely run down and almost all shuttered or apparently abandoned, were scattered throughout the beat. There were no supermarkets, banks, drug stores or even gas stations. Small food and liquor stores were open, but they were gated, and clerks in many worked behind bullet-proof glass.

However, the area was on the verge of changing. Anchored by a city college and a large new sports arena, Rebuilding had attracted some new housing
construction. Some were private investments, but others resulted from the fact that a nearby large public housing development had been partially demolished, and residents who lost their homes had been promised new ones. The placement of this “scattered site” public housing in the area was particularly troubling to the beat’s core group of long-term residents living in neat, if extremely modest, homes. Mass transit linkages to the city’s downtown were refurbished, and the area was cleaned up for the 1996 Democratic National Convention, held just blocks away prior to the beginning of our study period. However, the beat’s residents were unlikely to enjoy any of the benefits of this incipient renewal unless new job opportunities were to accompany the area’s renaissance. At the time we were studying the area, it appeared more likely the beat’s residents would eventually have to move elsewhere.

The remaining two African-American areas we studied were in much better shape, lying near the median income of the city as a whole. Many fewer families in these beats received public aid (in both cases about 12 percent). In both beats, these overall demographics disguised sharp contrasts among middle-class and poor communities cast together when the police department drew its beat boundaries. In neither area did residents of the better-off part of the beat consider those from worse-off areas as part of their “neighborhood.”

Pride’s vocal residents thought theirs was the pre-eminent black community in Chicago. It was a quiet neighborhood boasting mostly single-family homes. Many VIPs could be found in the beat’s west end. Streets were lined with well-maintained brick bungalows, some larger homes and brick apartment buildings from the 1920s and 1930s. Many featured block club signs, and the single-family dwellings had matching lampposts on their front lawns. Added to this was a stunning new luxury townhouse development secured by wrought-iron fences and burglar alarms. The middle third of the beat was also well-maintained and dotted with block-club signs, but it had fewer single-family residences, and the abundance of multiple-unit buildings made for more congestion. Building owners in this area were security-conscious, and most apartment buildings were surrounded by wrought iron fences with locked gates. The eastern third of the beat was much more densely populated, composed of rental buildings ranging from brick two-flats to large apartment buildings. Many were owned by absentee landlords and run by property management companies. The area was sprinkled with trash-filled vacant lots, and abandoned and boarded-up buildings were interspersed with well-maintained ones. One 72-unit building in this area had been designated as scattered-site housing for the homeless—a move that homeowners in this section of the beat were concerned would undermine the community. Loitering and street drug dealing were noticeable around residences, alleys, abandoned buildings and stores there and on the business strip just north of
Multi-unit apartment buildings filled the eastern third of the beat, where more than half the area’s crime, and even more calls for service, originated.

**Old Guard** was better off as a whole because its nicer, single-family home sections covered a greater proportion of the beat. Visual differences between the better and worse-off parts of the area were striking. The east end of the beat was primarily residential and middle class, while the west end was decidedly shabbier and more commercial and industrial in character. The far western fringe of the beat mixed abandoned apartment buildings and boarded-up warehouses with rundown, but still inhabited, buildings. Nearby were convenience stores and a liquor store—which served as loitering spots for gang members, drinkers and drug dealers—as well as a currency exchange that was a magnet for robbers and purse snatchers. Merchandise was sold from the backs of trucks to passers-by. This section contributed disproportionately to the beat’s problems. On the east end of the beat, neat brick bungalows and frame houses were intermixed with brick duplexes and three-flats of 1920s vintage. Streets and alleys were clean, and visibility was good even at night, thanks to well-trimmed trees, matching lampposts and motion-sensor lights mounted on garages. Minor code violations such as neighbors performing auto repairs in the alley sent residents scurrying to phone the police. Among the beats we studied, Old Guard had the highest proportion of senior citizens (almost 25 percent), and many of its residents had lived there a long time. What’s more, relatively few children lived in Old Guard, but among those who did, one-quarter attended private schools. Block-club signs dotted the landscape, and nearby commercial strips offered inviting neighborhood restaurants, lounges, beauty salons, laundries and a grocery store. Burglar gates were scarce, unlike on the beat’s west end, and many businesses sported signs announcing “No Soliciting/No Panhandling by Order of the Chicago Police Department.”

**Two Predominately African-American Beats**

**Southtown** was a poor, racially diverse community. Once a predominately Polish community covering approximately 40 square blocks, Southtown was now a community of African-American residents. However, almost 30 percent of Southtown’s population was Latino, and the number was growing, up from 20 percent in 1990. The two groups were physically separated by a railroad viaduct that split the beat, creating two separate communities, each with its own religious, educational and civic institutions. Local youths enforced this division by harassing and shooting at those who violated the boundary. The area’s park was closed due to a sniper incident. Groups on both sides of the viaduct lived
132 Neighborhood Problems

in wood-framed single-family homes or small brick apartment buildings. Almost all the residential buildings were occupied and many were well-maintained, with well-kept lawns. The beat’s Latinos were somewhat better off than its African-American residents. Latino in-migration stirred the real estate market, and relative to its median income (which was low), Southtown ranked first among the 15 study beats in the number of residential mortgage loans in 1994. In the rest of the beat about one-third of families were headed by single women and one-third received public aid. Bustling commercial corridors lining two sides of the beat had fallen dormant several decades earlier, and storefronts had been boarded-up or torn down. Only fast-food outlets, video-rental shops and storefront churches remained in business.

**Middle Classes** was a different community entirely. Somewhat more than half of its population was African-American and the remainder white. The division between the two groups was delineated by a commuter railway track bisecting the beat. Both groups were well-off—the white residents particularly so—but family incomes on the African-American side of the tracks indeed contributed to Middle Classes’ ranking among the city’s more affluent beats. Together, the median family income of the area placed it among the top 10 percent of beats in the city. Middle Classes was composed almost uniformly of single-family homes, the larger ones being situated in the better-off part of the beat. The predominately white (75 percent) side of the beat had a wealthy suburban air, while the almost uniformly African-American (97 percent) end was a more modest middle-class area. The wealthy section was essentially a walled community, with imposing barriers separating it from the rest of the city. Three sides were blockaded by a railroad line that could be crossed at only two points; a forest preserve impassible to automobiles and too large to be traversed easily on foot; and a wide, four-lane avenue dividing the beat from a neighboring suburb. The remaining boundary was created by large concrete planters that transformed once thoroughfares into cul-de-sacs that allowed automobiles to enter at only two points. Large single-family brick houses with spacious, well-manicured lawns lay inside these four artificial walls. The area was racially integrated—about a quarter of the residents were black and the remainder white—and residents held down well-paying public- and private-sector jobs. One church in the beat’s affluent end ran an esteemed parochial school, and it had one of the city’s best-regarded elementary schools. The almost completely African-American end of the beat featured well-maintained wood houses with smaller lawns. There were only a few pockets of visible decay, and the streets and alleys were clean and well-lit. The only commercial area lay along this end of the beat and featured thriving shops and a bustling street life.
Three Predominately White Beats

Together these areas represented the lifestyles of many white Chicagoans. Two beats were decidedly lower-middle class in character, home to city workers and dual-income couples who together made a very decent living. Both beats had a high proportion of high school graduates, but few college graduates (together, about 9 percent). Forty to 60 percent of school-age children in these beats attended private—predominately Catholic—schools. Reported crime levels were relatively low in all three areas, so the fact that the police department, in part, drew its beat boundaries to equalize workloads meant that each area was quite large. Bungalow Belt had a population of more than 21,000, and there were 14,000 residents of Blue Collars and more than 11,000 in Property Values.

Bungalow Belt was 85 percent white, and almost everyone owned their homes. The area had a suburban feel, enjoying trees and wide streets with ample parking and being serviced by nearby strip malls. A promotional advertisement for the area extolled its “City setting . . . Suburban charm.” Single-family homes made up more than 90 percent of the housing stock; most were small, moderately priced brick bungalows with neatly cropped front yards. The streets and alleys were clean, and outbreaks of graffiti led to great consternation and concerted action. In terms of family income, Bungalow Belt lay among the top 10 percent of all beats in the city. Small local stores long ago fled competition from the large national chain stores that now line an arterial road along the periphery of the beat. This area and other strip malls were quite distinct from the residential part of the beat, and cul-de-sacs protected some residential zones from traffic generated by the stores. Three large, well-maintained parks provided recreational space for residents and a place for youths to hang out in the summer. We estimate that following the 1990 census, the black population of Bungalow Belt grew from almost zero to 5 percent, and the Latino population doubled to 10 percent. In our survey, Bungalow Belt stood out in one regard; while only 2 percent of the entire sample volunteered that neighborhood racial change was one of their leading concerns, almost all such mentions were concentrated in Bungalow Belt, where racial change was cited by 17 percent of those we questioned.

Most of Blue Collars closely resembled Bungalow Belt, but it was made up of two distinct communities divided by a small industrial corridor. The western end housed middle-income white families living in small brick bungalows. The eastern stretch was more than one-half Latino, and many more dwellings there were two- or three-family buildings. Thus, more renters were attracted to the eastern section than to the western area. Latinos brought down the beat’s average income and education levels, but like their white counterparts they
were overwhelmingly employed, mainly in blue-collar occupations. Both ends of the beat were neat, with well-tended lawns. Because everyone was working, Blue Collars lay in the top quarter of all beats in the city when rated on the basis of income. The western end of the beat was served by national grocery chain stores situated in strip malls, while the east supported smaller, locally owned shops that advertised in Spanish and catered to Latino shoppers. Four elementary schools and a new high school were located in the area, along with a large park and play lot.

A beat we dubbed Property Values represented upper-middle-income white Chicagoans. It was a quiet, picturesque “suburb” that happened to be located in the city. On the western edge of the beat stood a large forest preserve with a golf course. (Beat community meetings were held in the clubhouse.) Homes were large and had the highest value (an average of more than $200,000 in 1990) of the areas we examined. Ranked by income, Property Values lay in the top 4 percent of beats in the city. Two-thirds of the children living in Property Values attend private, predominately Catholic, schools. Churches dotted the neighborhood, and residents defined where they lived by parish. In Chicago, municipal employees were required to live within city limits, and many top administrators lived in this beat. Centered around a commuter rail station, the area’s quaint business district was experiencing competition from nearby suburban shopping malls. This area earned its name from the primary concern we heard expressed at beat community meetings.

**Three Diverse Beats**

These three areas represented virtually all of the lifestyles that Chicago has to offer. Homes in these areas range from proud old mansions and luxury high-rise condominiums to overnight accommodations in single-room occupancy hotels. A fair number of elder-care and residential treatment facilities were mixed in as well. We defined their heterogeneity only in terms of race; residents were divided by culture and lifestyle.

**Stir Fry** epitomized the racial diversity of these areas—the population was about 32 percent black, 28 percent Asian, 23 percent white and 17 percent Latino. It was extremely dense. Almost 80 percent of the population lived in large apartment buildings, and only 1 percent in single-family homes. All 6,000 residents lived in a four-by-five block area. Homeless shelters, family service and development centers, and halfway houses could be found in abundance, drawing needy people like magnets. Off the commercial streets (which cut through much of the area) the housing stock was extremely diverse as well, including brownstone apartment buildings, tired-looking two-story wood-frame houses, brick townhouses, vintage three-family buildings and brick six-flats.
Some windows sported shabby makeshift curtains and peeling paint, while in other areas buildings were being renovated and converted to condominiums. Vacant lots abounded where buildings had been demolished. Some were serving as informal community gardens, while others were overgrown with weeds and filled with mattresses and garbage. Squatters called these unkempt lots home in the summer. Middle-class gentrifiers had recently moved into two areas of the beat where they hoped real estate would appreciate in value, but homeowners constituted only 3 percent of all households. The nicer buildings were fenced to keep homeless campers and prostitutes from using their yards. Stir Fry had the highest proportion of commercial property of the 15 study beats. One arterial street hosted convenience grocery stores, cleaners, laundries, a pool hall and restaurants, as well as several churches. Another offered resale shops, ethnic boutiques and inexpensive clothing stores. The beat also was home to a new Asian-oriented strip mall. The convenience stores sold small bottles of liquor and loose cigarettes to the homeless and indigent who congregated nearby. Pedestrians abounded, some pushing their belongings in grocery carts. Groups of older men loitered in front of the convenience stores and fast-food restaurants; women stopped to solicit them for prostitution or to proselytize for their church. Trash cans overflowed with garbage—noticeably liquor bottles and beer cans—and in the morning city sweepers could be observed cleaning up residue of the previous night’s action.

Potpourri was very similar, with a few thousand more residents and more whites. More than 95 percent of the population in both Stir Fry and Potpourri lived in multi-family apartment buildings. There were many single people in both places; almost 60 percent of householders in Potpourri and 40 percent in Stir Fry lived in single-adult households. A number of scattered-site and subsidized public housing units stood amid the area’s rental high-rises, nursing homes and residential treatment facilities for the mentally ill. “Street people” attracted to the area’s services and cheap housing, as well as its good public transportation, had a visible presence in the area. Home ownership was infrequent, at just 15 percent. A thin band of white middle-class homeowners lived along Potpourri’s eastern boundary, across from a lakefront park. In stark contrast to the western end, Potpourri’s east end streets were lined by large, well-kept homes with neat lawns. The area was effectively isolated from the rest of the beat by one-way streets and cul-de-sacs. Residents there largely ignored issues facing the rest of the beat and rarely attended beat community meetings. Potpourri was heavily commercial and had many excellent Asian restaurants; customers from all around crowded the main-street sidewalks and mini-malls day and night.

Solid Mix was also dense but mostly residential in character. It was a diverse, working-class community: the area had almost equal numbers of
Neighborhood Problems

whites and Latinos, and a small number of African-Americans. In addition about 10 percent of the population was Asian. It enjoyed the highest median income (falling in the top 40 percent of the city’s beats) of the three diverse beats, the fewest families receiving public aid, smaller apartment buildings and many more traditional two-adult families. However, there was tension among the races in Solid Mix. White residents expressed discomfort about the migration of Latinos and Asians into this formerly homogeneous blue-collar community, and (as we will see below) this translated into concern about neighborhood decline. A few of the beat’s streets were lined with mid-size apartment buildings, but most featured single-family homes and duplexes. A few apartment buildings on the eastern end of the beat were condominiums, and the bulk of the area’s poorer apartment dwellers were concentrated in the middle of the beat. A majority of police calls for service was from that section, as was the beat’s visible litter and graffiti. The local public school was so overcrowded that it served two shifts of students daily. This resulted in youths roaming the neighborhood at all hours, and it was impossible to tell which children should be in school. Many businesses surrounding the beat were Latino- or Korean-owned and catered to the local trade. Among them were laundromats, beauty parlors and auto repair shops.

Community Problems

What problems did these communities face? One of the ways we examined this was to survey residents in 12 of the areas. This was the best way to gauge the extent to which specific problems affected ordinary adults living in the beat. Observers also attended beat community meetings in all 15 areas and took note of issues that were raised. The concerns discussed reflected the views of vocal participants—an important but, of course, small segment of the community—as well as the priorities of police who attended and took an active role in the conversation. We also interviewed police and neighborhood activists one-on-one to gain an in-depth view of beat problems and what they were doing about them. Our observers also toured the beats repeatedly and came to their own conclusions, based on what they noted in public places.

The survey asked respondents to list “. . . the most important neighborhood problems affecting your area.” Interviewers then reminded them of the area we were interested in by reading the street boundaries of their police beat. Helping define the area was important, because beat boundaries and popular definitions of Chicago’s many small neighborhoods often do not coincide. Respondents were again reminded of the boundaries later in the interview. We asked for the most important neighborhood problem first, and then for the second and third most important. For each problem we also asked
Neighborhood Problems

where the trouble occurred so that we could map the responses. Most respondents had several concerns to report, and interviewers recorded their answers verbatim. These were later coded into more than 120 discrete categories. Overall, respondents described a total of 2,321 problems, or an average of 1.8 apiece. About 36 percent named three problems; 24 percent nominated two issues; 25 percent described only one problem; and another 16 percent indicated they could not identify an important neighborhood problem. The average number of problems identified varied across the beats, ranging from 1.3 in Property Values to 2.1 in Two-Turf. Almost half of those interviewed in Two-Turf had three problems to describe.

Four broad categories accounted for 52 percent of problems nominated:

1. Gangs were the most frequently mentioned topic, broached by 36 percent of those we interviewed. Residents expressed concern about gang violence, wars among contending groups, gang involvement in the drug business (which was classed as a gang problem), gangs in schools and gang intimidation of neighborhood residents.

2. Drugs came next, mentioned by 23 percent of respondents. Beat residents spoke of drug houses in their areas, street drug sales, public drug use and drug problems in schools.

3. Social disorder problems were described by 20 percent of those we interviewed. Graffiti and teenage loitering in the neighborhood each accounted for about one-quarter of the total and public drinking 13 percent. Vandalism and panhandling each contributed another 10 percent. Truancy and curfew violations, fights and “strangers in the neighborhood” were also mentioned, but less frequently.

4. Physical decay was brought up by 15 percent of respondents. Almost half of these problems involved trash, junk, litter or loose garbage in the neighborhood. Another 20 percent were reports of unsightly or ill-maintained buildings. The remainder included complaints about rats, noise, abandoned buildings and dog waste.

Three other general categories encompassed beat problems named by fewer residents:

1. Traffic problems were nominated by 10 percent. Most residents were concerned about parking, traffic congestion and speeding. These are not examined in detail in this report.

2. Property crimes were listed by 9 percent. Most were problems with burglaries and auto break-ins and thefts.

3. Violent crimes, including homicide, robbery and purse snatching, were also mentioned by 9 percent of those interviewed.
Other specific issues were mentioned. Some believed their neighborhood’s problem list included the ineffectiveness of city agencies charged with handling concerns like those listed above. About 5.1 percent mentioned that police were apathetic, that too few police were on patrol or that police were slow to respond when called. Only 1 percent volunteered that police harassment, disrespect or corruption constituted a problem in their neighborhood. The remaining problems cited were judged not to be “local” (for example, high phone bills, poor mail service, the weather); involved macroeconomic issues (poverty and unemployment) or general social problems (moral decline); or were personal in character (for example, illness or aging).

An important feature of this approach to assessing neighborhood problems is that it reflected Chicagoans’ assessments of conditions in their communities when measured in a very unprompted, open-ended fashion. People were free to describe problems in their area irrespective of official categories or record keeping processes by which they usually are tracked. Categories we developed to classify them closely reflected their own words. Unlike for most “officially recognized” problems, there was no screening process in place to identify which complaints were of merit (by some standard) and which were not. For example, police officially record only complaints they deem to be “founded” and dismiss as “unfounded” those they cannot fit into criminal statutes or those they regard as involving insufficient criminal intent. Thus there was no guarantee that the assessments of neighborhood problems gathered in the survey (or via personal interviews) would match official measures of the volume or seriousness of a neighborhood’s problems. Many concerns raised probably would not be considered problems at all by standards traditionally employed by the police or other city agencies, because they did not fall into routine service categories or they involved conditions or events that were ultimately lawful. Others that did qualify might well have received a low priority rating. The social disorder and physical decay categories were particularly rife with these types of problems. But regardless of any congruence between residents’ perceptions and outsiders’ views of their communities, these were the issues on residents’ minds when they were asked to consider problems affecting their neighborhoods. The survey’s procedures capped the number of problems respondents could describe at three; they had to set priorities and could not insist that everything was of equal importance. To the extent that Chicago’s community policing program is to respect the popular definition of problems that need solving, these issues could be some of the “raw material”—albeit in a still-unanalyzed state—for police and community problem solving.

Not surprisingly, many concerns plaguing the study neighborhoods reflected the beats’ race and class composition. Many of the most frequently reported
Neighborhood Problems

problems were typically concentrated in poor and minority neighborhoods. However, there were important differences in the kinds of issues reported by African-American, Latino and Asian respondents, so neighborhoods where the various ethnic groups were concentrated exhibited varying constellations of problems. This is illustrated in Figures 5.2a and 5.2b, which chart the social distribution of the two most common problems—gangs and drugs. Figures like this appear throughout the remainder of this book. They illustrate the relationship between two variables by showing where each beat’s score caused it to fall in the chart and by illustrating a regression line (which will curve if necessary to reflect the data) that describes the general relationship between the two variables, taking all of the beat scores into account. In Figures 5.2a and 5.2b, the left axis of each chart presents the percentage of beat residents identifying a particular problem. The beats are also arrayed by their social and economic features, which are displayed across the bottom of each chart.

Gangs

As the top panel in Figure 5.2a depicts, reports of gang problems were concentrated in Two-Turf, Fiesta and Norte, the three heavily Latino areas. Residents of Blue Collars, a lower-middle class area with a new and growing Latino population, also mentioned gang problems more than 40 percent of the time. Residents of Solid Mix, on the other hand, reported fewer gang problems despite its substantial Latino population.

In Norte, drugs were often mentioned in conjunction with concern about gangs. However, while they sold some crack cocaine, the three large Latino gangs that dominated the area were combat-oriented and even tolerated independent heroin dealers in their midst. One gang was a local group formed to defend the area from white gangs to the north and west. Gang violence and street shootings were also the most important problems in Fiesta, which was tied for first among our study beats for murder. Violence erupted in Fiesta for control of territory. Fights and occasional shootings erupted around schools there at closing time. Fiesta’s gangs had carved up the area on a block-by-block basis, but they constantly tested the boundaries. Gang graffiti was a common sight, and gang members gathered on corners or outside apartment buildings, intimidating passers-by. The five major gangs in the area were local in origin and had been active there since the 1970s. Unlike in Two-Turf (see below), drugs were not identified by neighborhood activists or the general public as a major problem in Fiesta.

Because of their concentration in Latino areas, gang problems were associated with all factors that characterize those beats. One of these factors, the concentration of youths in the beat, is presented in the lower panel of
FIGURE 5.2a
Gang Problems
FIGURE 5.2b
Drug Problems

percent female headed families

percent African-American, Latino or Asian

percent a problem

r = +.84

r = +.81
Figure 5.2a. As it illustrates, the three Latino beats had distinctively youthful populations. In Two-Turf, for example, almost 40 percent of the population was below 18 years of age. White and African-American beats with relatively few children reported fewer gang problems. That community was deeply disturbed by the activities of local white youth gangs that reportedly formed in reaction to advancing racial transition. As one beat officer described it, “The gangs out here are more into territory. They break each other’s car windows—rivalry stuff. . . . They chase each other down and beat each other up with bats.” Other factors associated with gang problems and the concentration of Latino residents include limited education, crowded housing and schools, population turnover and linguistic isolation.

**Drugs**

Drug problems plague areas where African-Americans, Latinos and Asians are concentrated. As the top panel of Figure 5.2b indicates, reports of drug problems were few in number in the three predominately white home-owning areas: Property Values, Bungalow Belt and Blue Collars. Solid Mix again had fewer problems than predicted by its racial composition alone, as did Fiesta. Drug problems were greatest in the poorest of the areas: Rebuilding (primarily African-American) and Norte. They were also high in somewhat better-off Pride and Old Guard (African-American), Two-Turf, and Stir Fry and Potpourri (both very diverse areas).

Drug trafficking in Rebuilding was facilitated by the proliferation of abandoned buildings and numerous vacant, rubble-strewn blocks where buildings had been leveled. A single-room occupancy hotel in the area also contributed to the problem. Drug transactions, conducted by teenagers who concealed their inventory amid the neighborhood’s ruins, primarily took place on the street. A computerized hot spot map from 1996 identified five drug zones encompassing about half the beat.

As noted above, gangs in Norte were heavily involved in the drug business. Unlike in some areas, the trade in Norte was concentrated in drug houses rather than on the street. During our field period, there was a constant stream of traffic in and out of one suspected drug house near a school in the beat. The very experienced drug-dealing family living there was difficult to connect with evidence of trafficking, however, and neighbors were afraid to share any information about the family with the police. In Pride’s troubled east end, on the other hand, the problem was open-air drug markets. On ride-alongs, our observer noted,
Groups of teens and young adults crowded into apartment building foyers and congregated on the sidewalks in front, scattering when police cars pulled up. Alleys were also gathering places for adults and teens known to the police as having criminal records for drug possession or dealing. On the business strip that separates the east end from the rest of the beat were smaller groups of teens who ducked into stores or crossed the street when police cars approached. One night, an apparent drug deal in progress in the parking lot of a closed gas station was interrupted by police; it was obvious that the supposed customers were not area residents, because they were white.

Major gangs in this area had these street drug markets neatly divided up, so violence between them was infrequent. Customers occasionally got roughed up because they tried to pass through one gang’s turf to buy from another, but control of points of sale was stable and uncontested. The business orientation of organized gangs in the area helped insulate Pride’s residents from some of the gang problems plaguing residents of Latino communities. Pride ranked fourth from the bottom in terms of resident perceptions of the extent of gang problems. Instead Pride residents were concerned about bands of loitering youth, often apparently clad in gang apparel but involved in no particular trouble. Pride ranked second (at 10 percent) in the proportion of residents naming loitering as one of the biggest problems. In Stir Fry, concern about street drug dealing was linked to the area’s aggressive street life, in particular to the prostitutes and bands of men who congregated, loitered, panhandled, drank, and used and sold drugs with seeming impunity amid the congested street life of this area.

Across the study areas, drug problems were high in the most “bombed-out” and semi-abandoned beats—areas with abandoned buildings, high apartment-vacancy rates and numerous vacant lots. The four beats that were highest in terms of drug problems had four times as many abandoned buildings as the remainder, twice as many vacant parcels of land and twice as many vacant homes. The correlation between the extent of drug problems and median income was -.75. Single-parent families and public-aid recipients were concentrated in drug-plagued areas, and local schools were very bad. As Figure 5.2b (lower) illustrates, drug-plagued areas had more female-headed families. Unlike with gang problems, there was a strong link between drugs and crime. Street crime, gun use, domestic violence and public disturbances were very common in high-drug areas, based on the police department’s crime and 911 dispatch data. The street crime rate in the four worst drug areas was twice that of the other study beats, and the gun crime rate stood out almost as much.
**Physical Decay**

Visual evidence of decay and neglect, a category encompassing unsightly, unhealthy and occasionally dangerous conditions, was very strongly linked to neighborhood poverty. The top panel of Figure 5.3a depicts the quality of life afforded by affluence, as measured by median family income. At the top of the income ladder were residents of Property Values and Bungalow Belt, who mentioned unsightly or unsanitary conditions less than 10 percent of the time. That percentage doubled among residents of Norte and Potpourri. Two areas stood out as having worse problems than predicted by their wealth—Fiesta (poor) and Solid Mix (ranked just below the top 40 percent of beats in the city).

Based on resident rankings, physical decay was most pronounced in Fiesta, and the Latino fraction of the population was substantial in the five beats where these problems were most prominent. Population density contributed to this: unlike many areas, Latino neighborhoods in Chicago were growing in population, straining city services. Fiesta’s alleys were strewn with garbage, and rats constituted a serious menace. Litter wafted through the area, kicked up by the bustle on the streets and sidewalks. In Fiesta litter or trash was named as one of their area’s biggest problems by 20 percent (almost twice as many as the next highest beat) of those interviewed. Observers who sat in on the area’s beat community meetings found that decay problems were discussed at 83 percent of them, which was highest for all of the study beats. Solid Mix ranked second in terms of trash and litter problems, and second in terms of concern about graffiti. However, we observed that many of the area’s residential blocks were neat and clean, and much of the muss seemed confined to alleyways and trash bins. In this area, longtime white residents are quick to register concern about threats to the area’s well-being, which in their view was linked to the area’s racial transition. Forty percent of homeowners, as contrasted with 16 percent of renters, were concerned about physical-decay issues. White residents were three times as concerned as Latinos about trash and junk in the area, and twice as concerned about general decay.

Residents of Norte had done a significant amount of beautification, but other forces were working against them. Like some other poor areas of the city, Norte was inundated by fly dumpers—drivers who unloaded their trucks in alleys and vacant lots rather than paying to deposit their trash or construction rubble at licensed landfills. Residents also feared the consequences of scattered-site public housing materializing in the area in light of the Chicago Housing Authority’s record of maintaining its properties. Sections of Potpourri—primarily a rental community controlled by absentee landlords—were in very poor condition. Many buildings were not kept up, and trash and broken glass littered the streets and empty lots.
FIGURE 5.3a
Decay and Disorder Problems
Because of the association of unsightly and unhealthy neighborhood conditions with poverty, those problems were linked to a long list of community factors. Several of the most problem-plagued areas were heavily Latino and thus were isolated from the rest of the city by language, education and lack of transportation. Areas characterized by frequent complaints about decay problems were among the densest we studied. In dense areas, residents lived in crowded apartment buildings—a living arrangement almost six times as common in the high-decay beats than in the other study neighborhoods. Decay was also more pronounced in areas that encompassed considerable commercial or industrial land, and in those with high vacancy and building-abandonment rates.

The burden on the city’s service-delivery system created by concentrated physical decay could be seen in the study neighborhoods. During a three-year period, the sanitation department’s graffiti cleanup teams visited 6,169 addresses in the 15 areas. One-third of those locations needed to be cleaned only once, and two-thirds required four visits or fewer during that stretch of time. But one building in Fiesta was cleaned 38 times by city crews, and a mere 16 buildings in that beat required 450 graffiti clean-up visits among them. Across all of our study areas, the worst 30 buildings needed to be cleaned 829 times.

**Social Disorder**

The portrait of neighborhood social disorder drawn in the lower panel of Figure 5.3a is more complex. Recall that this list is dominated by unlawful activities such as graffiti, public drinking, vandalism and truancy that traditionally were not taken very seriously by the authorities. The social disorder category also includes often lawful activities lying on the fringe of criminal law, including loitering, panhandling, fights and noisy domestic discord. Across the study neighborhoods, these problems posed little concern at both ends of the income spectrum. As Figure 5.3a (lower) illustrates, social disorder problems were most commonly cited in areas in the middle of the income distribution. They were highest in Stir Fry, Blue Collars (composed of whites and some Latinos) and Old Guard (the best-off African-American community). Three other middle-income neighborhoods also rated disorder higher than those areas at the top or the bottom: Solid Mix, Potpourri and Pride. Residents of poorer areas had other problems on their minds, while those in the best-off places were concerned about relatively few things.
The high-disorder communities render very different results. In Blue Collars, where Latinos continue to edge in on traditionally white-ethnic turf, concern about disorder was equated with the emergence of gangs and gang graffiti. In Blue Collars, 25 percent (more than twice as many as the next highest area) of those we interviewed identified graffiti as a problem. Homeowners were more than twice as concerned as renters about decay issues. Police, residents, and the alderman saw gang graffiti as a high-priority concern because it signaled changing neighborhood conditions. Our observers found that social disorder problems were discussed at every one of Blue Collars’ beat community meetings. They judged that gang activity seemed confined to vandalism and youths “hanging around.” It was not linked to drug problems, which were infrequent in Blue Collars. Housing conversions that illegally divided larger homes into multi-family units for newly arriving Latino residents were also considered a problem in the area. In Pride, on the other hand, the threat posed by loitering young men loomed large on people’s minds. During the day youths stood alone or in pairs, dressed in obvious gang apparel; as the day wore on they turned out in larger numbers on the corners of intersections along the beat’s arterial streets and along its commercial strip. Longtime residents did not recognize these young men, whose presence intimidated passers-by. They were suspected of shoplifting, burglary and robbery, particularly around currency exchanges and a regional public-aid office.

As noted earlier, Stir Fry’s central issues revolved around the large number of people roaming the streets day and night: male and female prostitutes and their pimps, panhandlers, “bag ladies” and their male counterparts, runaways, peddlers, drunks and (almost certainly) street drug dealers. They congregated around transit stops, fast-food restaurants, liquor stores and convenience grocery outlets. Many were drawn to the area by the services and free food distributed by public agencies and private charities active there, as well as by the single-room occupancy hotels providing cheap places to sleep in the winter. Detritus left in their wake—including bottles, cans, food wrappers, and soiled blankets and clothing—littered the area. There was evidence of public urination and defecation. Stir Fry led the 15 study beats in the rate at which police were dispatched to handle disturbances and non-crime matters, including persons missing from halfway houses and homeless people sleeping in vacant lots, parks and public facilities. Observers who sat in on the area’s beat community meetings found that problems falling in the social disorder category also were discussed (as in Blue Collars) at every one of them.
**Personal and Property Crime**

Our survey of beat residents gathered reports of two different types of conventional crime: property offenses (principally burglary and damage or theft of cars) and personal crime (mostly robbery followed by homicide and purse snatching). Drug-related and many gang-related problems of course concerned criminal activity as well, but a substantial number of respondents described specific incidents or patterns of victimization that were plaguing their communities. Complaints about victimization due to personal and property crime were only modestly associated with one another, for property-crime problems were more frequently cited by residents of better-off beats, while at the same time, it was they who were least likely to indicate that personal crime was a problem. And, compared to the other problems they had on their minds, those we interviewed did not mention crime very often. Scoring “high” on personal crime meant that about 12 percent of those interviewed in an area thought it was an issue.

The top of Figure 5.3b illustrates that reports of property-crime problems were concentrated in higher-income beats. Across all beats, property crime was more frequently cited in residential areas dominated by single-family homes. The four beats where residents most frequently nominated property-crime problems averaged twice the income level of the other sites and almost four times the home ownership rate. Three of the four were largely white, but one—Old Guard—was African-American in composition.

Property crime was the only issue stirring much response from residents of affluent Property Values; this area came in last in terms of frequency with which problems were mentioned in the survey, but concern about burglary put it fourth on the property-crime-problems measure. Based on police reports, Property Values actually had the second highest burglary rate of the beats we studied; they were mostly thefts from garages. Observations of beat community meetings indicated that Property Values tied for first place in the frequency (86 percent) with which specific crimes were discussed. Police statistics for middle-income Bungalow Belt ranked it third of 15 in terms of theft and in the top half for burglary. Garage thefts and break-ins were frequent there too, and tools and lawn furniture were the most frequently stolen items. The police view was that residents did not secure their property very effectively, but some residents read crime as a disquieting signal of neighborhood racial transition. In Blue Collars, which ranked first according to police burglary figures, concern about property crime was concentrated among white residents we surveyed, but not among Latinos. Garage burglaries were common in Old Guard, the most affluent African-American community, because of the opportunities created by the single-family homes covering almost two-thirds
FIGURE 5.3b
Crime Problems

Property Crime

Personal Crime

Old Guard
Blue Collars
Bungalow Belt
Pride
Potpourri
Solid Mix
Stir Fry
Two-Turf
Rebuilding

Property Values

r = +.79

median family income

percent a problem

median family income

percent a problem
of the beat. Shoplifting is an offense that does not so easily come to residents’ attention, but police considered the large grocery store and retail shops along one edge of Old Guard to be “shoplifting central.” Old Guard was the other beat in which crime was discussed at almost nine of 10 beat community meetings.

Concern about personal crime (bottom of Figure 5.3b) was concentrated in areas dominated by blocks of apartment buildings, where there were fewer families and more unattached residents. The three areas where residents most frequently identified personal crime problems included one African-American community (Pride) and the two most racially heterogeneous areas we studied, Stir Fry and Potpourri. What they shared in common is that they all attracted single, unmarried individuals. Almost 60 percent of Potpourri’s residents were unattached single people; that figure was almost 40 percent for Stir Fry and 37 percent in Pride, mostly in the worst corner of the beat. By far these three areas ranked highest on this dimension, and in all three areas a substantial percentage of the population lived in large, anonymous apartment buildings. Potpourri and Stir Fry each hosted a vibrant street life, with commercial strips and transit stations that people frequented at all hours of the day and night. Our observer noted that public places in the deteriorating end of Pride were also “hopping with pockets of activity,” even in cold weather. Street robbery and purse snatching were concentrated at this end of the beat. All three of these areas were home to significant numbers of disadvantaged or marginalized residents who were vulnerable to victimization. One police sergeant in Pride described thefts from seniors who used the area’s currency exchange and bus stops in the area as a 25-year-old problem.

The ubiquity of crime in these highest-crime places is illustrated by Figure 5.4. It charts Potpourri’s crime “hot spots”—groups of crime incidents or drug arrests that form unusually tight clusters flagging “where the action is” in an area. The data are for the first half of 1996, before our field work began. They identified a large drug-selling zone encompassing the north-south streets connecting two major arterial routes; these streets in turn lead via easy entrance ramps to an expressway heading to the northern suburbs. In this area, gang members were out selling drugs at all times, and there was tension between African-American and Latino gangs jockeying for control of the trade. Streets were covered with trash and broken glass, and the buildings along it were in poor repair. Four burglary hot spots—one enveloping the area along the lakefront park where the most affluent whites lived—marred the beat. There were three assault and rape zones, one largely overlapping the drug-market corridor. In total, more than 95 percent of Potpourri’s inhabited area fell into one or more crime hot spots. In the survey of this beat, concern was expressed about drugs, burglary and personal crime by 45 percent of those we interviewed.
FIGURE 5.4
Potpourri Crime Hot Spots
Problems and Agenda Setting

While residents’ concerns and priorities were not the only factor driving police problem-solving priorities, they were supposed to play an important role in setting that agenda. This study of problem solving therefore used the community’s views as a starting point. The beat survey enabled residents to describe in their own words the local issues facing their neighborhood. They also spoke up for themselves at beat community meetings, where our observers were present.

Not surprisingly, we found that problems of almost all types were concentrated in poorer areas. A summary measure of this was the average number of problems cited in the survey. More problems were mentioned in low-income areas (the correlation was +.86) dominated by renters (+.88) and multi-family dwellings (+.89). Problems were also mentioned with greater frequency in areas that were dense (+.80) and dotted with vacant housing (+.74) or commercial or industrial buildings (+.63). Problems were more common in racially heterogeneous places (+.54) and in heavily Latino beats (+.58). Who had what kinds of problems was also fairly clearly defined. In a nutshell, residents of African-American beats cited drug-related problems. (The correlation between the two measures was +.69.) Residents of heavily Latino areas reported gang-related problems (+.86) and physical decay (+.80). In predominately white areas, residents were most distinctively concerned about property crime (+.61). Residents of the three most racially diverse beats identified a more divergent set of problems, but the second most-cited problem in each area fell in the social disorder category.

While police found some of this predictable, there were also some surprises in store when first they began talking with community residents and fielding complaints at beat community meetings. Police were fully prepared for the high-priority set on drugs and gangs, for those problems lie at the core of urban America’s predicament. But they also heard a lot about social disorder and physical decay, problems that previously had not been part of their agenda. The beat survey revealed that these issues stood third and fourth on the public’s agenda, and at beat community meetings what police heard was even more revealing. Our observers found that social disorder was discussed exactly as frequently as drug problems, both at 73 percent of beat community meetings. Physical decay problems were discussed at 51 percent of the meetings—more frequently than gang problems (42 percent).

What police heard was also highly variable. Gang problems were discussed at 12 percent of the meetings in one beat and at 68 percent of those in another. Discussion of physical decay took place at 3 percent to 28 percent of meetings. Drugs were a frequent topic of discussion in Inner City (the issue came up at every beat community meeting we observed), but in Bungalow Belt only 4
percent of respondents mentioned drugs in the survey, and drug problems never came up at the beat community meetings we attended. (According to police records, drugs were discussed at only 6 percent of meetings in two and one-half years.) Exactly how these discussions were interpreted varied as well. While Bungalow Belt had no drug problems, the topic of gangs came up at every beat meeting in Bungalow Belt. Discussion of gang problems in Bungalow Belt was really a discussion about social change and the future of the neighborhood. Gang problems were also noted at every beat meeting in heavily Latino Norte; there, they were a discussion of violent street gangs.

This unexpected content, high variability and sometimes complex social meaning was precisely the reason for Chicago to adopt a problem-solving orientation to policing. The closer association between police and residents facilitated by the formation of beat teams and the inauguration of beat community meetings gave police a valuable “listening post” where they could learn about these local concerns and act locally in response. Unlike in the past, organizational arrangements created to support problem solving gave the police tools to deal with a broad range of problems, not just problems for which responding rapidly and making arrests were the solutions.
This chapter examines the problem-solving capacity of Chicago’s communities. It focuses on citizen involvement in the city’s problem-solving program as a prelude to the next chapter’s exploration of the role policing played in places where that “homegrown” capacity was limited. Our surveys and field observations found that communities varied tremendously in their ability to solve problems on their own and to form partnerships with police and other agencies. Some communities were richly endowed with active community organizations that were sometimes professionally staffed but more often organized around blocks or within small neighborhood boundaries. Others communities supported only a few struggling civic associations. In some areas neighbors felt they could count on each other to watch out for trouble and even to intervene, if necessary, on their behalf. Elsewhere, people thought they were pretty much on their own, possibly not even trusting the motives of their immediate neighbors. A few communities we examined had a proven capacity to get help from public and private institutions. These areas had been able to extract outside resources to help deal with local problems and exercise control over the way in which programs were implemented in their areas, because they were capable of gaining the attention of developers, politicians and agency chiefs downtown. In other areas, residents did not have any downtown connections and were unable to mobilize for collective action and, as a result, they were largely disregarded by the outside world.

Analysts have labeled these capacities “social capital” to highlight how their benefits parallel the productive possibilities inherent in economic capital. Robert Putnam (1995) identifies “networks of civic engagement” as a key form of social capital. Civic engagement is reflected in the density of local
organizational life, because organizations enable individuals to share, accumulate and prioritize their concerns, as well as to coordinate their efforts to deal with concerns at the top of the agenda. Organizations institutionalize individual effort, as they can sustain problem solving when individuals tire, retire or turn to other interests. Civic engagement is built upon the expectation of reciprocity. Where people assume that others will take the initiative when it is their turn, spontaneous acts of generosity, support and even courage will be more common. Communities that are high in social capital engender a great deal of mutual respect and trust, which facilitates cooperation among residents for their mutual benefit. These kinds of connections have been dubbed “horizontal” social capital, to highlight how they link individuals to one another.

Another form of social capital is a community’s capacity to extract resources from the outside world. While problem-oriented policing promotes the image of communities “pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps,” in many areas handling the most pressing problems may be beyond the capacity of residents alone. In the areas we studied, these types of problems included infrastructure deterioration and the collapse of city streets; blatant and continual drug dealing and prostitution; and high rape and murder rates. Other areas needed job-training programs, health clinics and literacy classes. Beats that rank high on Putnam’s “vertical” social capital dimension were more closely bound to city- or areawide institutions that could deliver goods, services and economic capital these communities require to tackle local problems. For example, some beats we studied secured grants to freshen the appearance of their retail strips and residential streets. Another successfully agitated for a local branch library; beat meetings are now held in this “neutral” facility. One beat found a large sum to develop a sports center at an elementary school for resident use. An activist from this area confided that the source of the money was the “neighborhood’s best kept secret.” Residents of one study area were using cheap mortgage loans and an aggressive home-marketing program to battle racial succession. On the other hand, residents of two others were locked in hopeless fights against real estate developers keen to gentrify them out of their neighborhood. This study examined the “downtown” connections of each beat, including how well-connected they were to important political leaders and policy makers; whether their aldermen were aggressively pursuing community revitalization; whether government grants or private investments were visibly improving public areas of the beat; and if beat residents had “friends in high places” by virtue of their jobs or affiliations. Along with these factors we also assessed the political capacity of each beat in the electoral domain, a factor that counts a great deal when it comes to getting things done in Chicago.
Community capacity was measured using a variety of data sources. The most important was the survey conducted in 12 of the study areas. In addition to quizzing residents about their neighborhoods’ most pressing problems, the survey probed the frequency of organizational involvement and the strength of informal social control in each area. Our assessments of the strength of downtown connections were made on the basis of field work and interviews in each of the study areas. The beats’ capacity for mass political action was assessed using both survey and election data created by matching beat boundaries to the city’s electoral precincts. Ratings based on political factors were available for all 15 study areas.

Informal Social Control

One important problem-solving asset enjoyed by some communities but in short supply in others, is the extent to which residents actively represent the community norms by intervening to safeguard one another in threatening situations. The willingness of residents to step forward and challenge those who violate popular norms is one indicator of the strength of a community’s informal social control. In most theories of social organization this is viewed as one of the principal ways communities maintain order on their own initiative. Sampson, et al (1997) stressed the importance of informal mechanisms by which communities can “realize the common values of residents,” because it is apparent that many neighborhoods are unable to protect public behavior norms even when they are supported by a large majority of individual residents. They combined a similar measure of informal social control with a question measuring interaction among neighbors to produce a “collective efficacy” index that was in turn strongly linked to lower levels of neighborhood violence. In the language of social capital, informal social-control efforts are a strong manifestation of the “reciprocity norms” Putnam finds so prominent in places with a well-developed capacity to control their own fate.

We gauged the extent of informal control in each study area using resident survey data. Each respondent was presented with three brief scenarios and asked to assess the likelihood that neighbors would get personally involved in dealing with the incidents described. For example, in the case of “children spray-painting on a local building,” respondents were asked how likely it was that their neighbors would “step in and do something to stop them.” The survey also proposed that a teenager was harassing an elderly person and asked how likely it was that their neighbors would tell the youngster to cease. In the
case of a fight in front of their home in which someone was being beaten up, residents were asked about the likelihood of their neighbors “personally trying to break it up?” For each scenario the response categories were “very likely,” “likely,” “unlikely” and “very unlikely.” This perceptual measure represents what residents thought their neighbors were likely to do on their behalf or the extent to which they felt they were protected by a defensive web of social support.

Respondents thought it was most likely that someone would intervene to stop teens from harassing an elderly person: overall, 83 percent thought their neighbors would be likely to tell them to cease. (Forty-three percent thought it was “very likely,” and another 40 percent thought they were “likely” to do so.) Intervening in a fight was most problematic: 50 percent thought their neighbors would break it up, though only 20 percent thought it was “very likely”—the most certain category. Almost 70 percent thought their neighbors would step in to stop children from spray painting a building (34 percent “very likely,” and 35 percent “likely”). Responses to these three measures were consistent (the average correlation among responses to the three questions was +.40), so they were combined to form a single informal social control rating for each respondent and beat. The reliability of the resulting index was .66 (good for a three-item measure).

Close-knit, well-off and almost entirely white Property Values ranked first on the combined measure: 75 percent of residents thought their neighbors would “very likely” step in to protect the elderly, 67 percent would do so to stop spray-painters, and 48 percent to break up a fight. Next on the overall measure stood Old Guard, a mostly middle-class African-American beat with many long-term residents. At the bottom lay a predominately Latino beat, Two-Turf. In this gang-ridden area only 4 percent thought neighbors would “very likely” step in to stop a fight, and only 21 percent thought they would speak up to spray-painters. Two-Turf was a beat in which fear of violent reprisal may have been warranted. Just above Two-Turf stood the most diverse area, Stir Fry, where the perceived willingness of neighbors to intervene in a fight stood at only 9 percent.

Organization Involvement

Organizations offer a related, but distinct, vehicle for neighborhood problem solving. In Bungalow Belt, active community organizations busily worked to eradicate community problems, particularly those concerning delinquent youths and gangs. These organizations did so outside the structure of beat meetings, though leaders did work closely with their beat officers. One organization’s leader reported, “It works out good for both of us. We help
them make arrests, and they take care of our problem.” In Old Guard, where a great deal of problem solving was going on, a block club rallied owners to make property improvements, and many purchased identical lampposts for their front lawns to denote that their area was a cohesive one. In another area, members of an anti-gang organization worked together to identify gang hot spots for their beat officers and patrolled the troubleside of the beat a few days each week with their alderman. They also made extensive use of the city’s graffiti clean-up program.

For this type of participation, the relevant unit is the household. To measure the extent of involvement in neighborhood-based organizations, we asked survey respondents if they or anyone in their household was involved in any of a number of typical neighborhood organizations, one of which was described as “a neighborhood watch group or citizen patrol.” Respondents were also asked about the involvement of any household member in “a block club or community organization in the area.” The survey inquired if anyone in the household was involved in a PTA or Local School Council; the latter is a publicly elected body with considerable governing power over a city school. They were asked whether anyone was involved in a church or synagogue located in the neighborhood; about half of those surveyed were locally affiliated. Overall, about one-third of those we interviewed were involved in a local church or synagogue, 30 percent in a block club or community organization, 15 percent in an anti-crime group, and 12 percent in a school group. Overall, 58 percent of all respondents were affiliated with at least one organization on the list.

There was only a mild tendency for people to be “joiners” —involved in many things. Of the organizations on this list, the average correlation among the four involvement measures at the individual level was only +.16. This was in part because of different factors associated with involvement in each. No one was involved in a PTA or Local School Council unless they had children at home, and 63 percent of households surveyed were childless. (Among households with children at home, 27 percent participated in school affairs.) Belonging to a church requires religious commitment or an interest in the social component of involvement. However, in the aggregate these different forms of involvement seemed to work in unison. At the beat level, the average correlation among the four measures was +.62. A summary measure of local organization involvement that combined responses to these four questions was related in a clear and consistent fashion both to social correlates of community capacity and to consequences of being a heavily “capitalized” community.

Involvement varied a great deal across beats. In one of the most diverse beats—Potpourri—76 percent of households surveyed were not involved in any local organizations. There the most common form of involvement was local
church membership, which stood at 12 percent. Every other form of participation involved less than 10 percent of Potpourri’s residents. High numbers of non-English speakers and people living in nursing and mental health institutions or other types of shelters located in the beat may help account for low participation levels. In Property Values, on the other hand, 86 percent of households were affiliated with at least one local organization. Fifty-two percent were involved in a block club or community organization and 62 percent in a local church. Another predominately white, middle-income beat ranked second; in Bungalow Belt, 84 percent of those interviewed were involved in at least one group. The third most organized beat was Old Guard, the most affluent African-American community. Involvement in neighborhood watches or patrols was most common in Pride, another African-American beat. There, 26 percent of households were involved in explicitly anti-crime groups. Anti-crime involvement was lowest in Potpourri, at 6 percent. Old Guard was also number one (at 58 percent) in involvement in block clubs or community organizations. Solid Mix (white and Latino) came in last with involvement in block clubs or community organizations at 9 percent. In this blue-collar area one resident commented on the number of dual-income families, indicating they generally had little time or energy to devote to neighborhood matters. He noted, “I haven’t met people who help out.”

Where beats stood on each of the dimensions of informal social control and organization involvement is illustrated in Figure 6.1, which plots the strength of the former on the horizontal axis and the latter on the vertical axis. As the chart indicates, while intervening informally and participating in neighborhood organizations provide two quite distinct avenues for involvement in problem solving, the two generally went hand-in-hand. Among the 12 surveyed beats, the two measures were correlated +.78. Beats with a high capacity for problem solving on one dimension could bank on the other as well. Property Values stood first on both measures, followed by Bungalow Belt and Old Guard. At the bottom of the list combining the two lay Potpourri after Two-Turf and Stir Fry.

**Downtown Connections**

Figure 6.1 also indicates which beats proved to have a high capacity for extracting outside resources to address community problems and protect the amenities they already enjoyed. Most of the communities we studied had little ability to do so. Reasons varied, but as Figure 6.1 suggests, those having that capacity also enjoyed other advantages.

Downtown connections of the highest-capacity beats were social, organizational and political in nature. Some were home to well-off Chicagoans
FIGURE 6.1
Organization Involvement and Informal Control
with a wide range of connections with large employers, commercial and residential real estate developers and downtown mortgage lenders. Lawyers, doctors, bankers and other professionals accustomed to dealing with financial institutions were clustered in several of the study areas. Several beats were home to school superintendents and principals, leaders of city service agencies and top police officials—heads of the very city and county agencies from which other struggling communities vied for attention. But the rich and (locally) famous were not the only Chica
goons capable of extracting resources from downtown. One of the most solidly blue-collar of the beats boasted a high concentration of front-line city workers—street and sanitation workers, city inspectors, firefighters, clerical personnel at City Hall and the like. These workers were also knowledgeable about how things got done in the city and adept at getting what they wanted from downtown. Elected officials were active in representing the interests of about half the beats. In some areas, aldermen or their staff members frequently attended beat community meetings, were active on the district’s advisory council and were involved in securing funding for commercial redevelopment projects along the beat’s arterial streets. In every case, the highest-capacity areas were honeycombed with organizations large and small that battled for representation when city, state and federal dollars were being distributed.

Classification of the beats in terms of their downtown connections was made on the basis of interviews and observations in the 15 study areas. Three beats were given the highest rating. Old Guard enjoyed the attention of a powerful alderman and a well-connected civic-improvement association deeply involved in commercial revitalization of the area. In recent years it had delivered a giant home improvement center, a multi-screen movie complex, a new branch bank and a business corridor improvement project in the beat’s core. In Bungalow Belt there was a tight connection between the two aldermen serving the area and the beat’s powerful community groups. The politicians secured direct government funding of local groups working to stabilize the real estate market, and they and the organizations cultivated a stream of low-rate mortgage money to spur the purchase of homes as they came on the market. Residents of Bungalow Belt, with different interests at stake, counted as a major victory the fact that they stopped a multi-screen movie complex from entering the area, for it threatened to attract “outsiders.” They packed public hearings and gathered thousands of petition signatures in a successful effort to keep this entertainment magnet out of their backyard. Property Values was awash with top city officials, judges and politicians. City and county agencies were prominently represented at the area’s beat community meetings, as were local elected officials. Commercial areas in Property Values were well-represented by local chambers of commerce, and there seemed to be no
shortage of resources to keep them trim and tidy. Pride earned a “moderate” rating due to the social and organizational connections of the doctors, lawyers, judges and school officials clustered in the better-off part of the beat. The business association there kept after redevelopment projects and had considerable political support. But the eastern end of the beat was disconnected from all of this, served by an alderman with a narrow, service-delivery approach to his job.

The nine areas that we judged to have very little capacity for extracting resources from the wider community were not represented by large civic associations or umbrella organizations, Figure 6.1 illustrated the relatively low organizational involvement of residents in those nine beats. In Potpourri it was difficult for our observer even to locate beat activists to interview; a high proportion of residents were immigrants, many of whom spoke little or no English and seemed to devote their time and energy to simply getting by. In Inner City, informants told us that the city’s new policing initiative was “the only thing going on.” Residents of many beats lacking downtown connections were not politically sophisticated, and in some cases they feared, rather than relied on, the authorities. Several of these beats were ignored by their aldermen, sometimes because the aldermen’s electoral majorities were built around residents of other areas and sometimes because the aldermen were not particularly interested in delivering any but the most basic services to their constituents. Residents of Norte felt overlooked even by the service agencies that traditionally provide for the poor. In addition they believed their alderman and state representative to be inattentive, all the while fearing that gentrification that had begun to the east of the beat would eventually push up rents and drive them out.

**Mass Mobilization**

Alongside insider connections, mass politics is another of the channels by which effectively mobilized communities can get things done in Chicago. The areas we examined varied considerably in how well they played the electoral game. Three factors were taken into account in this assessment. The first was readiness of neighbors to organize to protect their beat against losing public facilities; this was measured in the surveys. Respondents were presented with a not-so-hypothetical scenario: “Suppose that because of budget cuts the police station closest to your home was going to be closed down by the city.” Residents were asked about the likelihood that their neighbors would organize to keep the station open. In Chicago parlance, this kind of city action is a “take away,” and respondents may even have remembered that the threat was a real one. In 1992, the city attempted to close seven police stations for staffing and
management efficiency reasons but was forced to rescind the move in the face of enormous community resistance. Across all areas, readiness to defend their station was commonly reported by both whites and African-Americans, but only one-third of Latinos and Asians thought their neighbors would get organized around such an issue. Another large gulf was between homeowners (60 percent of whom thought it was very likely their neighbors would arise) and renters (43 percent). As this suggests, the white and African-American home-owning beats (Bungalow Belt, Property Values, Pride and Old Guard) reported they would be more readily mobilized, while in Two-Turf only 28 percent thought their neighbors very likely to get involved, and in Stir Fry only 34 percent.

The second factor we took into account in rating each areas’ political capacity was electoral mobilization, measured by the voting turnout rate for the 1995 mayoral election. Election turnout was strongly influenced by race and social class; it was correlated +.91 with home ownership, +.74 with median family income, and -.66 with the proportion of residents who were Latino in origin. Among the study beats, high turnout areas were those where 40 percent or more of all adults (not just registered voters\(^5\)) came to the polls. This figure hit 60 percent in Bungalow Belt, and 50 percent in Property Values; it bottomed out in Fiesta at 11 percent and in Solid Mix at 13 percent. Interestingly, there was a high correspondence between the two measures of mass political mobilization. At the beat level, voter turnout measured by official records was correlated +.81 with the survey measure of mobilization around a potential police station closing, enabling us to rank all 15 study areas—not just the 13 surveyed—on this dimension.

Third, we looked at whom residents voted for and whether their favored candidate had anything to give them. Voting in large numbers for the wrong candidate does not score any points in the political game; as Milton Rakove (1975) famously put it, “don’t make no waves, don’t back no losers”—a mantra in Chicago politics. By the mid-1990s this rule of thumb worked to the disadvantage of African-Americans in the city. Across all of the city’s beats, support for the winner in the 1995 contest was almost entirely a function of race. The (inverse) correlation between support for the white incumbent and the African-American fraction of each beat’s population was an almost perfect -.99. The study areas repeated this pattern. The winner received only 16 percent of the vote in relatively well-off Pride and Old Guard, and 18 percent in impoverished Inner City, all African-American areas. At the same time,

\(^5\)The city’s voter registration procedures were in such shambles that the usual denominator for official turnout rates, the number of registered voters, was deeply suspect; see Simpson, 1995.
Bungalow Belt delivered more than 90 percent of the vote for the eventual winner, who also got just below 90 percent of the vote in Property Values, a Republican stronghold in national elections. Middle Classes, which was split down the middle with respect to race, gave him 45 percent of the vote. The incumbent did quite well in a cluster of low-turnout Latino areas as well. He garnered three-quarters of the vote in Norte, and 80 percent in Fiesta and Two-Turf. Eighty percent voted for the winner in Solid Mix, home to Latinos and whites.

**Ranking Community Capacity**

Most of these factors could be incorporated into a single numerical measure of the problem-solving capacity of each beat. The mass political mobilization component of the index combined election turnout and the survey measure of a community’s resistance to a police-station closing. It was correlated +.80 with the index of informal social control, and +.78 with the extent of organizational involvement. Involvement and informal control were in turn correlated +.78. Our assessment of the strength of downtown connections of each area was qualitative and categorical, and not included in the index, but Figure 6.1 illustrates how closely it was linked to other components of the measure. So tightly intertwined were the three factors included in the capacity index that there often was no practical utility in examining them separately; they all pointed to the same sets of high- and low-capacity areas.

**Three High-Capacity Beats**

*Property Values.* This beat stood at the top of the community capacity list. In the survey, more than 85 percent of households reported they were affiliated with a local organization and 41 percent with two or more. Block or community organizations were most frequently mentioned (52 percent), and explicitly anti-crime groups were mentioned by only 16 percent. Four well-organized civic associations provided coverage for every block in Property Values and were complementary in their objective of providing services not otherwise available to the community. The largest association claimed 2,000 members. It sponsored neighborhood cleanups and civic projects and lobbied for improvements in the area’s public facilities. Because the city only manages to clear major arterial streets of snow initially, this area’s civic associations paid a private service to plow residential streets and sidewalks. In this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic area, 82 percent of those we interviewed claimed a church affiliation, and 62 percent worshiped within the beat itself. In fact, this element of social cohesion was largely taken for granted; according
to one informant, a customary greeting when welcoming a new neighbor was, “What parish were you in?” Other indicators of the close-knit community included neighbors watching one another’s homes and accepting packages for those at work when deliveries were made.

In its relations with the outside world, Property Values was a neighborhood with “clout.” While other areas housed city workers, many of the top brass could be found here. Property Values was home to police administrators, political leaders, judges and business executives. The area’s businesses were effectively represented by chambers of commerce. The alderman was actively involved in beat meetings and the district’s advisory committee, which officials representing city and county agencies attended to take note of problems needing their attention. Voter turnout in Property Values was high, and solidly in the camp of the incumbent administration. If Property Values had any problems, help would soon be on the way.

**Bungalow Belt.** Residents of middle-income Bungalow Belt also established where they lived by reference to their parish, and 57 percent of those we interviewed (second highest) were affiliated with a local church. Our observer noted that church bulletins had been an important way of getting information disseminated in Bungalow Belt. But unlike in Property Values, where references to crime are unwelcome because they hint that there might be a problem, Bungalow Belt was honeycombed with aggressive neighborhood watch groups. The largest one, with more than 100 members, had a citywide reputation and kept at least two cars on patrol every night. A leader of this group described it as her “gang.” As she told us, “You come after one of us, all of us will come after you.” Critics from the part of the beat where racial minorities are concentrated knew this group well and referred to members as “vigilantes.” Twenty percent of households in Bungalow Belt were affiliated with a neighborhood watch or patrol group. In addition, Bungalow Belt was well-endowed with general-purpose neighborhood improvement groups and civic associations (48 percent claimed membership in at least one), and their efforts were coordinated by a large umbrella organization that encompassed the entire beat.

Bungalow Belt’s strong community organizations helped link the beat to outside institutions with resources. These groups worked closely with an alderman, real estate developers and mortgage companies. The alderman paid a great deal of attention to the beat and was quite involved in community-policing issues. Beat organizations concentrated on stabilizing the real estate market, controlling land use in the area and impeding unwanted commercial development. The many municipal workers who lived in the beat knew the city’s bureaucracies and how things get done. For example, groups in Bungalow Belt were able to convince a large retail chain to donate money to
the local library in return for support for constructing a new store in the community. This beat had the highest voter turnout rate of those studied (60 percent of all adults) and the highest support for the incumbent. The civilian facilitator who chaired the beat’s community meetings was a precinct captain. In this ward, precinct captains met to discuss how they could support community policing.

**Old Guard.** This beat is an African-American community where people simply have been around—together—for a long time. Old Guard had the most seniors and the fewest children of beats examined. Survey respondents there were the oldest we interviewed (averaging age 55) and, on average, they had lived in the community for more than 18 years (Bungalow Belt had the highest average at 19 years). It was easy to meet people there; Old Guard was a community of single-family homes and two-flats, and neat, inviting shops lined the arterial streets surrounding the beat’s residential parts. In the nicest areas, residents united to purchase matching lampposts for their front lawns. Old Guard residents raised their families together and worked for common causes through block clubs, local school councils, community associations and church committees. (There were six churches in or around the beat.) Residents greeted each other warmly at community beat meetings and socialized before and after the sessions. One subcommittee of the district’s advisory committee that focused on strengthening community networks had more than 100 members at one point, 20 of whom regularly attended meetings. Among their accomplishments were the sponsorship of an annual picnic for local youth and a workshop on how to start block clubs. Though one co-convener said of the training session, “We got a good turnout, but I don’t know if anyone started a block club as a result of it,” block club signs were visible everywhere. In the survey, Old Guard was number-one on this measure (58 percent of households claimed a block club affiliation). There was an active citizen patrol in the beat (Old Guard was ranked first on this measure, at 26 percent), and a member of the district advisory committee’s cellular phone patrol subcommittee lived here. The troubled part of this beat (about one-sixth of the area) was less organized; residents there were more transient, less educated and much poorer.

The troubled end of Old Guard was served by an alderman with strong connections at City Hall. His staff members attended beat meetings and stepped forward to tend to complaints raised there. The head of the area’s major civic-improvement association spearheaded redevelopment of the area’s business corridor and helped secure a major new business facility for the area. A large bank opened a new branch office in the better-off part of the beat and was very involved in business revitalization and local investment projects. One banker noted, “The strength of this community is that it doesn’t require
massive injections of capital because it’s not too deteriorated.” In terms of electoral turnout and perceptions that people would actively fight the closing of their police station, Old Guard stood fourth among the 15 beats we examined. However, the better-off part of the ward, where most residents lived, had a strong independent streak and had not supported winning candidates. It was represented by another alderman with less support from the executive branch. He did not deliver services very effectively, and business interests in the area worried that his lack of downtown influence hurt the beat.

**Other Areas.** We were unable to conduct a survey of residents of Middle Classes, but that community was also capable of extracting resources from the metropolitan community. The two middle classes represented on the beat—whites at one end and African-Americans at the other—fell under an umbrella provided by a large and powerful community organization with extensive connections to government. The alderman representing the beat’s white section was allied with a number of active associations and residents, and was very successful in securing crime-prevention funds for the entire area. That part of the district was home to judges, agency heads, police executives and Board of Education administrators. The larger African-American section of the beat had no discernible connections downtown, but its expanse of single-family homes and largely middle-class residents was adopted by a next-door civic association. Additionally, the alderman from the other end of the beat attended to policing matters in the beat’s African-American area as well. The beat registered high voter turnout levels but split its vote sharply along racial lines. Beat meetings were held in the white section of the area, so African-Americans did not attend in large numbers. A later section of this chapter documents that beat meetings in Middle Classes were among the least representative with regard to race.

Among the remaining beats, Pride evidenced enough social and political capital to be classed as a moderately capable community. One end of Pride, an area comprising about half the beat, was home to many influential: city officials, judges and real estate developers. A local business association managed to secure redevelopment funds for the area. However, the alderman was not highly regarded downtown. One activist told us, “He’s perhaps the only real independent voice in the city council right now, meaning he’s the only one who publicly opposes Mayor Daley.” The alderman serving the other end of the beat was not particularly interested in development issues. Residents at that end lacked the ability to influence the course of events in their community; for example, they were unable to halt the siting of unwanted Section 8 subsidized housing in the area. Compared to the others, Pride ranked third on the anticipated response of residents to the threat that they would lose their district police station; however, election turnout there was low.
Voters in Blue Collars turned out in larger numbers (about 44 percent made it to the polls) for winning candidates (94 percent voted for the winner). In the white parts of the beat, residents appeared ready to battle downtown for neighborhood resources. But community organizations were inconsequential in Blue Collars—the few that we identified primarily focused their attention on small and distinct parts of the beat rather than on the whole area. Though the area’s white and Latino residents were in agreement that the beat’s priority problems were gangs and graffiti, they did not agree on who was the cause of the trouble, and there was little discernible active solidarity among the two groups. Furthermore, the beat was divided among three different aldermen, complicating any problem solving needing their support.

Middle Classes, Pride and Blue Collars were all examples of how beat boundaries drawn by police can disrupt local definitions of “community” by cutting across social dividing lines and imposing a common fate on areas that otherwise have different trajectories. Those boundaries were drawn to equalize police workloads and facilitate ease of transit from place to place by patrol car. However, the effect in these three places was an undercutting of the capacity of the communities they dissected. In the case of Pride, police lumped together the well-off and poor in significant numbers, while casting boundary lines that still left them divided among different aldermen. No one came to the beat meetings from the poorer half of the beat; as will be documented later, the meetings were dominated by middle-class residents from the better-off end of the area. In Blue Collars there were no inclusive neighborhood groups, whites and Latinos looked to different leaders, and the area was divided among three aldermen, the majority of whose constituents mostly lived in other beats. The residents of Middle Classes shared an economic outlook but were sharply divided by politics and race (the two are virtually the same thing in Chicago), and the location of beat meetings determined that whites would get involved while African-Americans would not.

**Three Low-Capacity Beats**

**Potpourri.** The capacity of residents of Potpourri to exercise much influence over their common fate was extremely low, but so diverse and insular were its component communities, that it is unlikely there was much of a common fate to defend. Our observer found it hard to identify beat residents who were involved in community affairs in any organized way. A small band of townhouse owners was active in one part of the beat, taking vigilante-like action against the many serious problems in their immediate area. However, the two largest concentrations of better-off homeowners in the beat lived in enclaves effectively walled off from area problems by fences, cul-de-sacs and
parks. They drove directly into their garages from work and shut the doors behind them. Their homes were carefully armored and wired with alarms, and police were responsive to requests to watch their property during household vacations. Residents of these isolated pockets had the resources to take care of themselves and felt they had little in common with the rest of the beat, which they ignored. Elsewhere on the beat, residents were jammed into large apartment blocks, low-income retirement hostel, drug and mental-illness treatment centers, and unsavory single-room occupancy hotels. Almost 60 percent of the beat’s residents were single adults. They were divided among whites (40 percent), blacks (28 percent), Asians (20 percent) and Latinos (11 percent). The large Asian population included many non-English-speaking households (some reputedly illegal residents), and residents kept to themselves. They did not turn out for beat meetings, and they reportedly did not call police when they had problems. One frustrated activist claimed, “[They] don’t want to get involved. . . . Even if you shot inside their building, they won’t call police—even if the police are Asian.” Instead, they handled problems on their own, as best they could, without drawing attention to themselves. In the survey, more than three-quarters of households questioned in Potpourri did not belong to any groups. Only 6 percent were active in an anti-crime group, and only 12 percent were affiliated with a church located in the beat—the most frequent form of involvement everywhere. Potpourri residents were near the bottom in terms of perceived willingness to intervene to maintain order: 14 percent to break up a fight, one-quarter to discourage spray painters, and less than a third to rescue a senior citizen.

Stir Fry. This beat had a little more organizational life but could exercise even less informal control. Stir Fry was the most diverse area we examined, featuring an ethnic balance almost perfectly divided among whites, blacks, Latinos and Asians; Asians in turn were divided into at least six significant groups. In the survey, 62 percent reported they had lived in Stir Fry fewer than five years. This diversity was likely a factor behind the many discordant forces apparent in the beat, including political divisions among them and markedly different opinions about the beat’s priority problems. In terms of perceived willingness to rescue a senior citizen, Stir Fry came in last, and only two beats fell below it in challenging spray-painting vandals. There were only a few storefront churches in the beat, and the community’s organized life was largely confined to scattered groups of homeowners (the area was 93 percent rental) active in two civic associations. Many survey respondents claiming an organizational affiliation named an association representing tenants of their high-rise building, but these inwardly focused groups did not cast much of a security envelope outside the lobby doors. Residents involved in problem-
solving projects with the police did not get any support from the alderman representing the area. The alderman was firmly and actively opposed to the program because she felt it catered to the interests of gentrifying homeowners and real estate developers at the expense of the community’s poor. At one point her supporters picketed a storefront office opened nearby to coordinate neighborhood problem solving, with the intention of closing it down.

**Two-Turf.** At the bottom lay Two-Turf, a gang-ridden Latino community fractured along political and social lines. Its middle-of-the-pack score on organization involvement was boosted by church participation; in contrast to Potpourri or Stir Fry, there were 30 churches in this beat. However, their insular congregations declined to become involved in neighborhood issues despite entreaties by local activists, and residents of Two-Turf were otherwise not very involved in organized community life. Many residents were immigrants who distrusted the police, undermining involvement in anti-crime groups. One of our informants attributed the area’s limited involvement in problem solving to its density of gangs: “I’m positive that 90 percent of [residents] have members of their family that are gang members.” Residents were also not accustomed to using formal organizations to get things done. As one activist noted, “They don’t know how to form committees and pay dues. I threw a rummage sale, and it was the first funding experience most of them had.” While the two aldermen who split the area were not opposed to community policing, they disliked each other, thus making it harder to coordinate city support for the program. In one instance an activist tried to start a housing court committee to address the “horrible conditions” some residents were living in. She said that one alderman saw her standing at the other alderman’s side, whereupon the first alderman “came in and pushed me aside.” Another activist lamented that though there were plenty of social service agencies in the area, “They’re all pulling in different directions, so nothing’s getting done.”

**Community Involvement in Problem Solving**

How did community capacity translate into involvement in Chicago’s problem-solving program? As noted in Chapter 3, the primary vehicle for citizen involvement was beat community meetings. They were to provide a venue for discussing and prioritizing local problem and were one of the places where neighborhood residents could strategize about police involvement in problem solving as well as about their own. At best, beat community meetings were places where responsibility for problem-solving activities was divvied up, volunteers were solicited and deadlines were set. Beat meetings were held monthly in every study area, convening at the same time and location every
month so attendance could become routine. Both police and citizens’ groups publicized their occurrence.

We found that community capacity entered into this process in several ways. First, somewhat more people attended in areas where residents were politically mobilized and linked to one another through neighborhood associations, and in areas where neighbors could be counted on to challenge troublemakers. Second, beat meetings were more representative of the whole community in organized, high-capacity communities. Finally, citizen activists were more involved in problem solving in high-capacity areas. This was due in part to the fact that these activists were more tightly linked to the community through networks created by community organizations. They also were bound more tightly to one another through affiliations that emerged among those who attended frequently.

**Beat Meeting Attendance**

By the time our study began, most Chicagoans knew about the city’s new community policing program. The extensive marketing campaign described in Chapter 3 had managed to push recognition of the program’s name to almost 70 percent. In citywide surveys, program recognition was only slightly higher among whites than among blacks and those Latinos who were comfortable speaking English (which constituted a majority of Latino respondents). Among those who preferred to be interviewed in Spanish, program awareness was about 20 percentage points lower. The public’s biggest source of information about the program was television. Television spots aggressively marketed Chicago’s community policing program during sports events and featured local sports heroes (c.f., Skogan, et al, 1997). Probably because television is so ubiquitous, there was not much variation in sheer program recognition across the study neighborhoods. Recognition was highest in Bungalow Belt and Pride (both stood at 77 percent), and lowest in Stir Fry (58 percent). Elsewhere at least two-thirds of those interviewed had heard about the city’s community policing program.

There was more variation regarding awareness of beat meetings. The citywide figure was 43 percent; and in our beat surveys awareness of meetings ranged from 28 percent (in Solid Mix and Potpourri) to 61 percent (in Bungalow Belt). Among people who knew about beat meetings, 22 percent claimed to have attended at least one. When all Chicagoans were considered, about 9 percent indicated they had been to a beat meeting in the previous year. (Interestingly, the comparable national survey figure for involvement in neighborhood watch or “other anti-crime activities” for the years between 1992
Community organizations that met that criterion often worked in advance to drum up support for meetings by distributing flyers, mounting posters in shops and posting announcements in church bulletins. These organizations helped get people out in poor weather—always a decisive factor in Chicago. High-capacity communities also had a habit of turning out for political events and by reputation were places where neighbors did not stand idle when things needed doing.

A detailed picture of beat-by-beat differences in attendance could be drawn from two different sources. Our observers sat in on 81 beat meetings and counted the house. During the two-year study period the police also completed their own paperwork on a total of 281 beat meetings in the study areas. Comparing records later, we found that our counts and theirs were very similar; the correlation between the two sources was +.87 for meetings attended by observers. Disparities among records were apparent only in the largest meetings, where it was most difficult to conduct accurate counts and where residents often came and left throughout the proceedings. Because of broader coverage by the police, the analysis that follows uses attendance figures they collected. Attendance at meetings ranged from zero (when a meeting was scheduled and police were there, but no residents showed up) to 200 (in Bungalow Belt). Because beats varied widely in population, average attendance figures were divided by population to create a rate per 10,000 adult residents.

Figure 6.2 plots the relationship between beat meeting attendance rates and community capacity. Higher-capacity beats stood above all but Stir Fry, and five of the six highest-attending areas were those that scored the highest on the capacity index. The correlation between the two measures was +.62. It was even more highly correlated with the community-involvement component of the measure (+.71). Attendance was highest in Pride. An average of 30 people—most notably a crew of regulars—attended beat meetings in that African-American community. Those who attended reported that they had been to an average of eight other beat meetings in the previous year, and 81 percent had been to five or more meetings. (The average across all areas was 35 percent.) Nobody was there for the first time. The attendance rate was lowest in Blue Collars, where there was a lack of regular supporters. Only 17 percent of those attending had been to five or more meetings in the previous year, and 35 percent were attending for the first time. (Across all areas the average was 16 percent.) Meetings in Blue Collars were not small—an average of 20 neighbors attended while our observers were there—but the beat had more than 14,000 residents.
FIGURE 6.2
Capacity and Beat Meeting Attendance

low high

r=.62
The next issue was how representative beat meetings were of the people who lived there. Research suggests that there can be a “middle-class bias” in programs that rely on volunteers and that expect these volunteers to be “self-starters.” Too often volunteers turn out to represent only some segments of a community, as they tend to be older, better-off, more educated and—most prominently—homeowners rather than renters. In surveys these volunteers report being more satisfied with where they live and less likely to move out in the immediate future. In a nutshell, their high level of involvement reflects their emotional commitment and economic investment in the community. In Chapter 4 we saw this middle-class bias at work when residents were trained in problem solving. Despite the best efforts of professional community organizers, residents who fit this profile continued to turn out in larger numbers for instruction.

Why was this important? Stakeholders in Chicago’s program fretted about participation because they were committed to being inclusive. On the city’s side, one undisguised goal of the program was to help heal the breach between police and residents of poor and minority neighborhoods by involving them in positive programs. The city also needed to avoid having the program become an object of political controversy, which could happen if it became polarized along racial lines. One of the program’s “signature lines,” repeated in almost every public relations piece, was “Safe Neighborhoods Are Everybody’s Business.” The diverse set of community groups committed to the program was vested in multiracial participation—especially participation by their supporters. The program managers also believed that problem solving could not be effective unless both the problems and the resources that the community could contribute to deal with them were all “on the table.” Thorough representation of interests present in the community was, in their view, as important as the sheer magnitude of the turnout. And, the managers were familiar with the lesson that emerged from Houston’s pioneering community policing experiment, where only whites and homeowners got involved and reaped benefits from the program (Skogan, 1990), so one of their goals was to avoid a repetition of this in Chicago.

Beat meeting representation can be assessed by comparing the backgrounds of those who attended with the characteristics of the communities from which attendees came. The former came from the surveys administered to beat meeting participants in spring 1997; the latter were drawn from our bank of demographic information for each beat and from the community survey. A comparison of the two profiles indicated which groups were under- and overrepresented, and where it was occurring. At first glance, participants
Community Capacity for Problem Solving

appeared to be fairly affluent. Overall, more than 80 percent owned their homes, 90 percent were high school graduates (two-thirds also had some college background), they averaged almost 50 years of age and had lived in the community almost 20 years. However, the critical issue was how closely these participants represented their immediate neighbors.

Three panels in Figures 6.3a and 6.3b compare the populations of the beats with the backgrounds of those who attended beat meetings in terms of homeownership, race and education. Each panel includes a “line of equality” on which the beats would fall if attendees were perfectly representative of the community. Beats to the left of the line overrepresent the group in question; beats to the right underrepresent. The further from the line beats fall, the greater the mismatch. The largest gaps in Figures 6.3a and 6.3b are for homeownership, which is displayed in the top panel in Figure 6.3a. On average, homeowners were overrepresented by 39 percentage points. The largest gaps were in Two-Turf and Inner City. About 35 percent of homes in those beats were occupant-owned, but more than 95 percent of those who came to beat meetings were homeowners. In Southtown, the gap was 30 percentage points; about 50 percent of residents were homeowners, but 85 percent of participants (who were disproportionately Latinos in this majority-black beat) owned their homes. In Property Values and Bungalow Belt, almost everyone owned their home, and the beat meetings reflected this homogeneity.

Racial composition of the beats also did not translate directly into beat meeting involvement. The lower panel of Figure 6.3a contrasts the white percentage of each beat and beat meeting to the proportions that were African-American or Latino in origin. (Five study areas with very few white residents are grouped at the bottom.) Three beats fell on the line of equality, but whites were overrepresented in all of the other heterogeneous areas. White overrepresentation was very large in Middle Classes—by a full 43 percentage points. On average, whites were overrepresented by 17 percentage points; subtracting the five areas with few white residents, the figure was 26 percentage points. The top panel in Figure 6.3b compares the educational levels of attendees and their beats. Participants at the average beat meeting were more likely, by more than 20 percentage points, to have a high school diploma. Many areas lie near equality, and several of the outliers including Norte, Two-Turf, Southtown and Fiesta, were home to significant numbers of Latinos. (Of all Chicagoans, Latinos are least likely to have much formal education.)

The bias in beat meeting participation toward better-off residents with larger and longer-lasting stakes in the fate of the community was reflected in other measures as well. Beat meeting participants were older than the average age of adults in the community by almost four years, and they had lived in the community eight years longer than the average adult resident. (These data are
FIGURE 6.3a
Beat Meeting Representation
FIGURE 6.3b
Beat Meeting Representation
Based on the beat residents survey, we were also able to compare the attitudes of residents not attending meetings with those who attended. The views of the police were somewhat more positive as well.

Our expectation was that these biases would be lesser in higher-capacity communities. Based on survey and electoral data, these were places where residents were more likely to turn out for events. Residents there were also more tightly enmeshed in the organized life of the community, and those organizations in turn were often very supportive of the police department’s new project. Residents in this area were also not shy and thus were more likely to step forward and personally try to set wrong things right. In low-capacity beats, participation could easily be more limited; more strongly influenced by middle-class bias; concentrated in small areas; and could involve, at best, small groups of like (and like-minded) friends and neighbors.

The lower panel in Figure 6.3b explores the relationship between community capacity and the representativeness of beat meetings. It employs an index of the extent to which beat meetings were dominated by three better-off groups: whites, homeowners and those with more education. Beats that were poorly represented on one dimension did not fall uniformly one way or another on others, but they often diverged from equality in the same direction. For example, homeowners were heavily overrepresented in Pride, but high school graduates were not; Two-Turf, on the other hand, lies far from equality on every dimension. Overall, overrepresentation of whites (calculated without the five areas where there were none) was correlated +.68 with the overrepresentation of homeowners. Race and education gaps were correlated +.77, and education and home ownership +.54. Since they all pointed at about the same set of beats, these three measures were combined to form a single index of beat meeting representativeness.

The lower panel of Figure 6.3b compares the extent to which better-off groups dominated beat community meetings (the top of the left axis) with their capacity—the extent to which they were organized, politically mobilized and able to act in concert to maintain order in the community (the horizontal axis). The two measures were correlated -.76; beat meetings in higher-capacity communities were also more representative of the community as a whole. Whites dominated in low-capacity Potpourri by 34 percentage points, homeowners by 42 percent in Stir Fry and high school graduates by 50 percent in Two-Turf. In higher-capacity places, better-off residents did not predominate by such a wide margin. In Property Values all gaps were less than 10 percentage points. In Bungalow Belt the race gap was only two percentage points, and for home ownership it was only four percentage points.

Blue Collars did not fit the general pattern established in the lower panel in Figure 6.3b. Dominance of meetings in Blue Collars by better-off residents...
fell well below what would be predicted by its low-capacity rating. We attributed the area’s low-capacity rating to the fact that local organizational affiliations and informal social control had been disrupted by the immigration of a significant number of Latinos and the departure of the whites who sold them their homes. However, while meeting attendance rates were low there, representation of important community interests at beat meetings almost equaled that in much more homogeneous areas like Property Values and Bungalow Belt. The difference seems to lie in social class. Latinos moving into Blue Collars were more affluent than those in our other study areas. For example, fully 76 percent owned their homes; in Fiesta the comparable figure was 25 percent, and it was only 31 percent in Norte. Latinos in Blue Collars were also slightly more likely than those elsewhere to have a high school diploma. They were much more likely than other Latinos to be married. (Eighty percent were.) Both factors linked to participation. Although they represented a different cultural heritage, Latinos in Blue Collars otherwise more closely resembled whites, 80 percent of whom were homeowners. Blue Collars’ Latinos turned out for beat meetings at about the same low rate as white residents, reflecting the dispirited participatory environment of the community.

Involvement in Problem Solving

The final issue is the role played by community capacity in facilitating neighborhood problem solving. In Chicago’s model, beat meetings were to be the locus for citizen involvement in problem solving coordinated with police efforts. We anticipated that residents of highly mobilized, well-organized communities with a tradition of intervening would be the first to get involved in the city’s new program. For them, it would be an important—perhaps additional—tool in their kit of solutions to neighborhood problems.

To examine this, questions about neighborhood problems and problem solving were included on the surveys distributed at beat meetings. Participants were asked to describe “the most important problem facing your beat.” Then they were asked, “During the past year, have you been able to work on solving this problem?” Note that focusing on what they had done about the biggest problem facing their beat set a high standard. We did not ask if they had been doing any problem solving and, undoubtedly, there were some residents who had busily pursued less formidable challenges. Instead, in the spirit of the city’s problem-solving model, we asked about a priority problem. Residents were then presented with a series of questions about whether they had contacted any individuals, groups and agencies and whether they had worked on the problem with any on the list. In the rhetoric of the program, those listed were their
The most frequent thing residents had done was bring the problem up at a beat meeting; more than 70 percent reported they had done so. Sixty percent indicated they had worked on the problem with their neighbors, 49 percent with a block club or community group, and 42 percent with other family members. Two-thirds had contacted the police about the problem, 50 percent their alderman, and 41 percent had contacted other city agencies. Just under 40 percent worked with other people who had attended beat meetings with them. Overall, 83 percent had done something about their area’s most important problem. There was no empirical distinction between “self help” and “handing off” problems. Because of the emphasis on residents taking responsibility for their own problems, the earlier training sessions and much of the rhetoric of the problem-solving program discouraged residents from relying on someone else to solve things for them. However, the partnerships that were reported by these activists did not form clear clusters. Those who described taking action on their own or with neighbors or at beat meetings also turned to city agencies or their alderman 65 percent of the time. Those who contacted agencies or an alderman got involved personally more than 90 percent of the time. Overall, 65 percent brought the matter to the attention of the police, but virtually all of them also did something else. There was not a large body of participants that just passed problems along.

How much residents accomplished was a function of their links to each other and to the community. To assess this, an index was created by adding all contacts and alliances they named as resources for attacking their beat’s most important problem. It scored each participant in terms of the percentage of the list of partners that they had coordinated efforts with, therefore the “breadth of involvement” score potentially ranged from zero to 100 percent. Interestingly, the extent of a resident’s problem solving was only weakly linked to who the individual was: race, age, gender and length of residence were unrelated to the breadth of problem-solving efforts. There was a modest tendency for homeowners (+.15) and those with more education (+.19) to do more. Latino participants tended to do a bit less than others (-.16). However, how much a person did was much more strongly related to affiliations with each other and with the community.

The strongest correlate of problem solving was the extent of networking amongst meetings attendees, including contacts among meeting-goers outside the meetings, perhaps while problem solving or at activist meetings that some beats held, or at “pre-meetings” held to set the agenda for upcoming beat meetings. To assess this we asked respondents to “think about the people that you see at beat meetings” and whether they had (a) seen them around the beat,
(b) attended other kinds of meetings with them and (c) spoken with them on the phone. "Yes" responses to these questions ranged from 75 percent (they had seen them around) to 44 percent (they had talked on the phone). Responses were correlated an average of .33. They were combined as an index of the extent to which meetings had spawned a sub-community of activists who communicated with one another and shared their experiences. This measure of networking among participants was correlated .54 with the extent of their problem-solving efforts. Figure 6.4 illustrates the magnitude of this difference. As indicated, meeting participants who were not part of a beat-meeting network reported getting involved with 20 percent of the list; those who reported all three kinds of contacts with their fellow participants coordinated their efforts with almost 75 percent of the list. For comparison purposes, Figure 6.4 also presents differences in involvement between homeowners and renters. These differences were smaller than any of those associated with the dynamics of participation.

The next factor linked to problem solving was resident involvement in a local block club or community organization. Experienced organizers were correct to believe that neighborhood residents so involved would be more likely to sustain their problem-solving efforts between meetings. Overall, 55 percent of those attending indicated that they or someone in their household was involved in a community group, and the correlation between this and participation in problem solving was .38. Figure 6.4 illustrates the rather substantial difference between individuals in the two groups, which averaged 30 percent and 65 percent. This finding was quite consistent with earlier research on problem solving among Chicagoans who attended problem-solving training. As reported in Chapter 4, linkages to community organizations played an important role in sustaining problem solving among them.

Finally, the frequency with which people attended beat meetings was also linked to problem solving. Our survey of participants revealed that only a few (16 percent) were there for the first time. On average, residents reported attending five other beat meetings during the past year, and 35 percent had been to six meetings or more. Overall, the correlation between frequency of attendance and problem solving was .34. As Figure 6.4 depicts, breadth of involvement in problem solving ranged from 30 percent to more than 60 percent across various levels of beat meeting attendance. Chicago's beat meetings involved a surprisingly large number of "regulars," and their commitment frequently extended to getting interested in problem solving as well.

How do factors that influenced problem solving link in turn to neighborhood-level features? Figure 6.5 illustrates the resulting relationship
FIGURE 6.4
Correlates of Problem-Solving Involvement
FIGURE 6.5
Capacity and Problem-Solving Efforts
between capacity and involvement in problem solving at the beat level. The correlation between the two measures was +.73. Involvement in problem solving was higher in every high-capacity beat than it was in every low-capacity area.

**Capacity, Problem Solving and Policing**

The highly varied capacity of communities to deal with neighborhood problems on their own presents a challenge to police. The challenge of finding ways to selectively supplement—and perhaps help restore—the capacity of communities to deal with their problems is easy to state, but harder to act on. This challenge is in turn linked to some great national debate about community-oriented policing centering mainly around two issues: does it help the worse-off get better off, or do the better-off just get even better off; and can it function effectively in diverse communities?

This analysis of conditions in the study beats suggests that a community’s home-grown capacity for problem solving reflects the general pattern of social advantage and disadvantage that dominates American society. All capacity indicators were closely linked to affluence and racial homogeneity. Older, better-off homeowners predominated in the self-regulating and well-organized areas, while poor apartment dwellers with large families were concentrated in areas where it is hard to get people involved. The capacity index was highly correlated with median income (+.67), home ownership (+.75), average age of residents (+.87) and length of residency (+.88). Finally, Latino communities were at a disadvantage compared to both whites and African-Americans.

Capacity was in turn related to problem solving by beat activists. Attendance at beat meetings was higher in high-capacity areas, and capacity was linked to the extent to which participants got involved in problem solving. An important link between capacity and problem solving was supplied by residents involved in community organizations. In areas where they came, more got done. High capacity beats were also more fully represented in the city’s program. Those who attended beat meetings in those areas more closely matched the demographic complexion of the area; in low-capacity areas they tended to overrepresent the best-off elements of the community. They were also more representative in the sense that participants were linked to other residents through the web of community organizations active in high-capacity beats.

The threat that problem solving in Chicago would principally assist better-off neighborhoods in becoming even better off thus was a real one. The same factors that placed beats in the enviable category at the upper-right corner of Figure 6.1 also made the majority of them easy venues for community-oriented police work. A beat officer working in Bungalow Belt described his
as “the perfect CAPS beat” in reference to its family orientation, strong organizations and high turnout at beat meetings. (Bungalow Belt averaged 100 residents per meeting.) On the other hand, residents of Two-Turf (overall the lowest-capacity community) were unfamiliar with the basic concept of a fundraising rummage sale. Those living in Bungalow Belt and other high-capacity communities also identified more closely with the police. The beat surveys included three questions asking residents to rate the police who worked in their neighborhood. Residents were asked how responsive police were to community concerns, whether they were dealing with the problems that really concerned people in the neighborhood, and how well police were working with residents to solve local problems. Responses to these questions went together strongly, with a high correlation (+.80) between community capacity and support for the police. Bungalow Belt came just below Property Values on that measure, while Two-Turf stood dead last.

The challenge to community policing is to implement an effective program that helps the worse-off get better off in places like those in the lower-left quadrant of Figure 6.1—neighborhoods without much capacity to defend themselves, like Potpourri, Solid Mix, Stir Fry, Norte, Fiesta and Two-Turf. It would also speak to the concerns of Chicagoans who were most disaffected from the police and most likely to doubt police responsiveness to the community. One reason for conducting this detailed study was to report on how well Chicago has done to date in that corner of the city, an issue addressed in the next chapter.

Another challenge to community policing is presented by diversity. The beats in this study that were racially and ethnically homogeneous found it easier to get organized, and residents believed their neighbors were more willing to intervene and confront troublemakers. All five areas with significant community capacity were very homogeneous in composition, including two white and three African-American beats. To examine this relationship in more detail, we calculated an index of demographic homogeneity based on a comprehensive breakdown of the racial and ethnic composition of each beat; a high score on this index reflected the concentration of most residents in one category or another. The results are presented in Figure 6.6. The homogeneity index was correlated +.77 with capacity and strongly with all of the components of the measure.

Blue Collars illustrates the point. This beat had many fundamentals in its favor, but it did not register very high levels of capacity. Blue Collars was an area of neat single-family homes and two-flats, and home to a significant number of city workers and others with stable jobs paying middle-income family wages. In terms of income, Blue Collars was situated in the top quarter of all of the beats in the city. However, it fell into the cluster of low-capacity communities.
FIGURE 6.6
Capacity and Racial Homogeneity

capacity predicted by home ownership and family structure

low high

Potpourri

Stir Fry Solid Mix

Blue Collars

Fiesta

Norte

Two-Turf

predicted

r = +.77
communities that included Norte, Fiesta and Potpourri, apparently because racial transition in the area upset existing relationships and discouraged maintenance of beatwide alliances and mutual support. Newly arrived Latino residents were much less involved in local organizations, most of which served shrunken, ethnically homogeneous bits of the beat. Our survey found that residents of Blue Collars were substantially more likely to think they were not getting adequate service from the police, and they were less optimistic than most about how well community policing has progressed in the area. White residents of Blue Collars were concerned about the area’s newly emergent graffiti problem, and they saw much more local social disorder than did white residents of other comparable areas.

To investigate this further, Figure 6.6 presents some “hypothetical” measures of capacity as well. We used multiple regression to predict the capacity level of each community surveyed. As reported above, the social correlates of capacity are very strong; together, home ownership and family structure (the percent of households consisting of two-person married couples) explained almost 80 percent of variance in capacity. A comparison of the actual capacity of each area with what it “should have been” based on social factors found four discrepant beats, presented and identified in Figure 6.6. Data from these beats support the proposition that racial homogeneity facilitates the development of community capacity. As the figure indicates, Blue Collars was much less organized and politically mobilized, and exercised less informal control than it “should have.” Its predicted value would have put it among the highest-capacity areas, but it actually sat where its racial heterogeneity would place it. Pride and Fiesta, on the other hand, “should have” evidenced less capacity—Pride for its poor end and Fiesta for its large concentration of struggling immigrants. But both were racially homogeneous and actually scored much higher than predicted. Finally, Potpourri “should have” enjoyed a higher level of capacity, due to its well-off lakefront dwellers, but instead clustered with the most diverse group of low-capacity beats.

With the small number of beats involved in this study, it is difficult to draw firmer conclusions about the separate and distinct role that diversity plays in fostering community capacity, but research in other cities cautions us in this regard. That research suggests that in diverse communities, suspicion and fear may divide an area along race, class and lifestyle lines. Diversity makes it easier to blame others and abdicate personal responsibility for taking constructive action. At the extreme there may appear to be no community of interest to be found amid the diversity. Local residents may instead find themselves battling each other over policing priorities, thus threatening to politicize the program.

But it is also possible for police to provide a bridging link in diverse communities. Beat meetings and district advisory committees could bring
together community members in a regular, safe public forum where participants’ concerns are aired and their commonality recognized, perhaps for the first time. Chicago’s program provided an incentive for cooperation because a united community could make a more credible claim for attention from the police and their partner agencies. Residents united around a common set of problems, and thus speaking with a clear voice, would be able to leverage more resources than by speaking separately and disparately. Finally, compared to many actors like politicians or investors who make key decisions about neighborhood policies, beat officers can be expected to operate in a relatively law- and rule-bound fashion. Police are less free to decide matters based on their personal views. With proper mechanisms for supervision and accountability in place, we should be able to expect officers to safeguard the rights of all citizens and act with lawful restraint even in the face of popular demands for action. In addition, we can hope police will help residents find common ground for taking action.
The Police and Problem Solving

The police make up the final part of the problem-solving equation. Their defining role will always be the one that society uniquely entrusts to police: to threaten or use force (sometimes in deadly fashion) to deal with dangerous and too often armed lawbreakers who threaten the safety of the community. But adopting a problem-solving model expands the scope of their responsibilities, reflecting the broader conception of policing that lies behind it. In this model, the police are charged with promoting community security. To accomplish this they have to take on a number of new tasks ranging from coordinating the delivery of city services to hosting community meetings and supporting residents’ efforts to organize themselves. Central to this new mission is that police must form partnerships with the community to bring resources of residents and local institutions to bear on local concerns and to support development of an indigenous problem-solving capacity that can sustain the effort while police tend to other matters they are uniquely empowered to address.

The study beats were selected to evaluate how well problem solving actually was being implemented. They were chosen on the basis of their demography, location and residential character rather than on any knowledge of policing there. As it turned out, among the 15 beats examined, four were doing an excellent job, five were fielding reasonable programs, two were struggling to make the grade and four failed to implement much problem solving at all. After profiling some of the best and worst police work we encountered, this chapter describes in detail how these assessments were made and examines some of the factors that seem to explain why problem solving was underway in some places but not in others. It then turns to the relationship between policing and community factors, including racial homogeneity and capacity for self-help. As noted at the end of the previous chapter the issues include
whether community policing helped the worse-off get better off, and whether it can help develop communities of interest in diverse areas.

In the profiles that follow, we have done a few things to help protect the confidentiality of the people we interviewed. Selected details that went into the overall rankings may not be fully described. We also changed the gender of all pronouns to masculine forms in order to reduce the identifiability of some officers, despite the fact that women played important line and staff roles in some of the beats.

The Best and the Worst

Two-Turf was the most highly rated beat. Beat team officers there worked regularly on priority problems and reported on their progress at beat team and community meetings. They were also quick to take on fresh problems raised at beat community meetings. The team’s staff meetings were energetic, and the officers did not hesitate to dispute or debate ideas that were tossed out, even when top brass was present. They developed new and sometimes innovative strategies to address issues identified in the beat plan; officers preferred to negotiate solutions to problems when they could. For example, at a beat meeting residents registered two complaints—about men congregating and drinking behind a liquor store and about truck drivers leaving their vehicles parked illegally for days on end. Beat team officers identified the troublemakers, spoke with them, kept after the situations and resolved the problems. In the process they made local acquaintances rather than arrests. The day-shift officer on the beat team was particularly aggressive in combating graffiti—a significant problem in this Latino area. Team members made extensive use of the information in their well-worn beat binders.

The sergeant who lead the team was dedicated to involving residents in community beat meetings, and he spent a great deal of time working with and supporting the somewhat-shy civilian facilitator who helped lead the sessions. The sergeant was a very dynamic leader at the beat team’s meetings and encouraged his officers to propose and debate ideas. The beat’s plan was well thought out and identified clear and addressable problems at specific locations. In addition to addressing the shorter list of prioritized problems identified in the plan, the team’s leader insisted that officers follow up on all issues raised at community meetings. He made a list of these issues at each community meeting, and at team meetings there was group discussion about what to do about each one. The sergeant developed his own “special attention” form to record less significant problems that he did not want to put on the official
record as priorities (for example, overnight truck parking on residential streets) and tracked his officers’ efforts against them, too.

The district management team worked to support these efforts. The lieutenant responsible for the area (the “sector management team leader”) attended about half of the team’s meetings and some beat community meetings. He actually reviewed the team’s beat profiles, plans and meeting logs, and provided feedback about what he saw there. On occasion he identified problems that transcended single beats for coordinated attention. When a beat team sergeant proposed that security police from a troubled public housing development in the sector be invited to the sector management team’s monthly meetings, he quickly endorsed the idea. (Around the city, most police did not give any recognition to these “second-class cops.”) The district commander devoted a great deal of attention to youth programs he was developing—a priority in an area rife with gang activity. He also adopted an experiment by Two-Turf’s beat team leader of involving another sergeant as an “assistant beat team leader,” and made it a districtwide practice.

The beat’s largely Puerto Rican and Mexican population was not particularly supportive of the police; in the resident survey Two-Turf ranked last on that dimension. Yet beat officers and their sergeant remained optimistic and committed to community involvement, and at one team meeting we attended they brainstormed about how to increase beat-meeting participation. They established good ties with resident activists, and a cadre of loyal participants helped sustain beat meetings. Based on our surveys, beat officers attended beat community meetings, on average, more than six times a year; this placed Two-Turf fifth on the list in terms of beat-meeting participants’ commitment. At beat community meetings, officers reported progress on issues that had been raised at previous sessions. The officers made aggressive use of the city service request process, and representatives of city agencies frequently were invited to attend. Almost all the meetings we observed featured at least one prearranged presentation on some topic. At these meetings the officers also reported on the area’s improving crime statistics and patterns revealed in computer maps of the beat. Lists of crimes or arrests and computerized crime maps were distributed at every meeting we observed. Often a printed agenda was distributed as well. The district’s neighborhood relations unit also distributed a newsletter that detailed police efforts. However, consistent with the department’s plan to pass responsibility for community meetings over to police who actually work in the area, neighborhood relations officers did not play a visible role at these public sessions. The beat team’s responsiveness to public concern was signaled when it added street prostitution to its official list of priority problems, even though team members did not think it was so bad. Officers followed up with undercover and enforcement
measures to counter the problem that did exist. In our judgment, the most significant shortcoming of this team’s effort was a common one: limited effort to involve residents in problem solving. But Two-Turf’s beat plan respected citizen input, and team members were aggressive in resolving—and reporting back about—problems of all sorts.

Little redeemed Stir Fry, the lowest-rated beat we studied. On individual evaluative dimensions it tied for the worst district management, beat leadership and officer involvement, and it had the second-worst beat plan. The officers serving there worked on the assumption that they could not resolve any of the beat’s problems; they felt helpless to do anything about them. They did not look beyond their traditional crime-fighting role, but they recognized the limitations of that type of action against persistent problems. On this beat, problem solving consisted of patrolling more often, talking to troublemakers and issuing citations. (The officers did not like to make too many arrests, because of the paperwork.) Beat team members reported that they were not doing anything different than they had in the past, yet they still thought that “community policing isn’t working.”

The beat team sergeant viewed the program as a public-relations ploy that imposed a lot of new paperwork on him. He made up a beat plan that encompassed some efforts that community activists had already undertaken on their own and declared he had not used it, and did not plan to do so. In his view, the area’s problems were “100 percent societal” and not going to change, so he saw little reason to analyze or strategize about them. He did not want to press too hard on his officers, who already felt “put upon” by the demands of problem solving. The beat team’s meetings were unproductive; few officers came, there was no discussion among them and the usual conclusion was that nothing was new. The sergeant’s view of beat community meetings was that they were a forum for voicing complaints about the police—an attitude that did not surprise us.

In this beat, community meetings did provide a useful forum for bringing up individual problems, because a district neighborhood relations officer attended and was an active participant. Along with some traditional enforcement efforts by beat officers in response to issues raised in the meetings, the neighborhood relations officer’s efforts were instrumental in whatever problem solving took place in the beat. However, he was not considered part of the beat team and was not invited to team meetings. The survey of beat residents included questions assessing whether they were aware of Chicago’s community-policing program, and Stir Fry ranked last on the list. Residents there ranked tenth among the 12 beats in terms of awareness that beat community meetings were going on. Beat meeting turnout rates were middling, as described in Chapter 6. Beat meetings in Stir Fry attracted a small
coterie of regular participants; an average of only 16 people came to meetings, but they did so almost seven times a year. As we saw in the previous chapter, they very disproportionately represented the small number of homeowners in a beat where most were renters. A civilian beat facilitator reported that any problem solving that did take place was organized by block clubs and not through the police department’s channels. This was consistent with the failure on the police side to make use of special procedures developed by the city to deliver services that were supportive of problem solving. Based on two years of data on graffiti cleanups in the area by city crews, Stir Fry ranked in the middle of the study beats in terms of volume of service. Those records indicate which visits were triggered by a special service request from the police; over the two years the percentage of cleanups requested by police stood at zero.

The commander of this district had good public-relations skills but thought that was the primary gist of community policing. He was amiable and accommodating to the public, though he did not really understand that the program called for his officers to undertake new and more ambitious projects than in the past. The district’s beat plans were thrown together to meet the department’s deadlines and were not followed through. The lieutenant who supervised the beat teams in this sector did not play a leadership role. There were few management team meetings, and he had not actively reviewed the team’s very sketchy paperwork.

More of the Best

The police serving Bungalow Belt came very close to first-place in the ratings. Officers who worked the day and evening shifts were very supportive of problem solving, were quite involved in the dialog at beat community meetings and reported back at ensuing meetings on their actions. They also developed a special form, distributed during meetings, that enabled participants to anonymously identify problems needing police attention. The team also used a homegrown form to track progress on problems. Officers who worked in the early evening coordinated their efforts with a neighborhood watch organization representing the area. The sergeant brought a lot of enthusiasm to beat team meetings, which were a locus for spirited exchange of information and strategies that officers identified. Beat team members sometimes employed nontraditional strategies, including sponsoring rallies or working with neighborhood watch groups, but their sergeant wished they had more training and a better understanding of the program. Team members worked regularly on priority problems identified in the beat plans. One of those was added to the list because nearby residents were fearful, although officers did not think it was very important. Residents were concerned about youths congregating in
a park during the evening to drink, smoke marijuana and make noise. Officers
looked into it, concluded that the youths were not gang members and that their
activities were much exaggerated, and reported back that they classed it as a
“non-problem.”

In part, all this good-spirited activity was tied to the fact that officers working
in Bungalow Belt saw the area’s problems in exactly the same light as did most
residents. In much of the district, officers identified closely with community
groups; they stopped at organizers’ homes to exchange information and shared
their pager numbers widely. Perhaps as a result of this consensus, the survey
found that 91 percent of Bungalow Belt’s residents thought police serving their
beat were responsive to community concerns. The beat ranked number two
on overall enthusiasm for quality of police service in the area.

Bungalow Belt was tied for first place (with Pride) when it came to knowing
about the city’s program; in the survey, 77 percent of adults had heard about
it. In addition, the beat was honeycombed with active organizations; Bungalow
Belt tied for number one with Property Values on that measure. However,
residents were not particularly involved in joint activities with the police. Beat-
meeting attendance was very high in Bungalow Belt; the area ranked second,
with an average of 100 residents coming to every meeting. But discussion at the
meetings remained focused on airing complaints and identifying problems for
the police to solve. Neighborhood watch groups interfaced with police
principally by paging beat officers to provide them with information or by
calling 911 when they wanted arrests made. Otherwise, residents by-and-large
carried out their activities independently of the police. They took this stance
because their foremost concern was white flight to the suburbs. Their efforts
were directed mostly at protecting property values and stabilizing the local real
estate market through fix-up campaigns, reasonable mortgages and aggressive
marketing of the area among prospective home buyers. This area enjoyed low
rates of violent crime, few social disorder problems, little physical decay and
no serious gang or drug problems. Nonetheless, the area was one where 17
percent of those surveyed pointed to white flight as one of the area’s biggest
problems. Residents were tackling that issue aggressively outside the structure
provided by the city’s problem-solving framework.

The relationship between police and the community was not so strong in
pockets of the beat where Latinos and African-Americans dwelled. Residents
there had a tense relationship with organizations representing white residents
of the beat. Residents in those pockets certainly were not avoiding dealing with
the police: one of the goals of representatives of the minority area was to have
the monthly community meetings held closer to their end of the beat. They
had more crime problems than the rest of the area, and when they attended
beat community meetings their principal demands were more visible patrols and faster response times.

Bungalow Belt’s sergeant was very supportive of community policing and had an excellent understanding of the program. His community meetings featured printed agendas, crime maps and flip charts for recording problems as they were brought up. He had a good relationship with the community, and he tried to convince residents to take an active role in problem solving. In spite of this, he lamented that most of the beat’s residents believed that increased police patrols were needed to solve their problems. He noted, however: “CAPS has opened a door that can never be closed. The community was really happy about community meetings and getting to know us and telling us stuff.” This beat shared problems with the beat next door, so he developed responses to them in concert with the team leader there. The sergeant directed extremely productive team meetings and contributed his own creative strategies to discussions about resolving problems. He reminded officers of the importance of maintaining paperwork that documented their efforts and of keeping their beat plan binders up to date in case they were inspected. Officers working the afternoon watch did not have any problems with the paperwork. As one reported, “We like to prove to the upper-echelon guys what we do. We want recognition.” One problem the sergeant faced was that the officers who worked midnights in this beat refused to attend either beat team or community meetings, because they decided they did not like the program. For reasons not clear to us, no one challenged their withdrawal, perhaps because, as is typical of the midnight shift, they had so little contact with the general public.

The district commander responsible for Bungalow Belt was not particularly excited about community policing, but he understood what he was supposed to do. He strongly supported community-relations efforts and mentally put the program in that category. The lieutenant who served as sector management team leader watched over activities of his teams and reported about them at district management meetings, but in this case he did not need to provide much guidance. He encouraged his sergeants to coordinate their efforts across adjacent beats. The district’s civilian administrative manager attended many community meetings and played a key role in drafting a good-quality district plan.

Norte was also high on the list. Beat team officers were quite willing to work with residents to make the area a better place in which to live. They were concerned, though, because residents were reluctant to get involved in problem solving. To get things going, they asked residents to help them tackle one of the beat’s major problems—fly dumping. Officers encouraged those living in the area to take on the “eyes and ears” task of identifying offending trucks so they could trace the owners. There was evidence that officers were
making good use of their beat profiles and information binders, and they were knowledgeable about many aspects of life on their beat. When asked about trends in the area, they pointed to such factors as improvements that residents had made to their property, a beautification program and newly dug community gardens. One of Norte’s beat team officers had worked his area for many years and had intimate knowledge of its residents, businesses and problems. He worked closely with community members, the local school and city service agencies. This patrolman kept the beat’s paperwork straight, maintained the beat profile and helped draft the beat plan.

The beat team sergeant was an enthusiastic and vocal supporter of community policing, and a conscientious supervisor. He actively coordinated his officers’ missions and was adamant that they devote significant attention to the priority problems identified in the beat plan. During team meetings he reviewed procedures and protocols that needed to be followed and reminded team members of the importance of keeping up with their paperwork. The meetings also featured a review of the beat’s priority problems and discussion of actions need to counter them. Team meetings in this beat were unusually well-attended, including representatives of the neighborhood relations unit, the district administrative manager and the team’s lieutenant, as well as beat officers. The sergeant understood that residents have a role to play in the new scheme of things in Chicago. Part of one beat team meeting was devoted to participation issues and ways in which to get the beat’s civilian facilitator more involved in coordinating events surrounding the beat community meetings. A sincere and amiable chap, the facilitator initially was not sufficiently dynamic to motivate his fellow residents. The team’s sergeant met with the facilitator in advance of each community meeting to review issues needing to be raised, and during the months we visited the beat, the facilitator’s leadership skills improved markedly.

Norte, a predominately Latino beat, had a stronger social fabric than did Two-Turf. The neighborhood survey indicated that more residents in Norte thought their neighbors would likely intervene when trouble occurred. In personal interviews activists reported that community policing had a unifying effect on the area, and they hoped to be able to capitalize on the beat’s potential for a strong informal social control network. As one resident explained, “I’ve met new neighbors. There were people that live directly behind me that I never knew. I met them at the beat meeting.” The beat-meeting attendance rate was about average for several years prior to our study, with about 25 residents participating every month. Those who came were fairly loyal; the survey of participants found that they attended about five meetings per year. Beat team members were quite loyal as well; one beat officer who transferred to another area came to an additional community meeting just to
say good-bye and to introduce his replacement to the neighbors. The vitality of beat community meetings in Norte was significant, because the organizational life of the community was otherwise quite limited. The district’s neighborhood relations office managed to compile only a sparse list of organizations serving the beat, and in the survey Norte ranked third from the bottom in terms of resident involvement in local groups.

The involvement of beat meeting participants in problem solving was also limited in Norte; the beat ranked third from the bottom on this measure. There appeared to be some improvement in this during the course of the study, but for most of the period residents came to the meetings to get their problems solved. They voiced their complaints and then listened to team members explain how they intended to handle them. As the sometimes-disheartened team sergeant described it, “CAPS has the potential to make things better, but the community just doesn’t get it. . . . They come to the meetings, and they’ll talk about the problems, but then they just sit there and expect the officers to tell them what they did about it.” Like a surprising number of police we have encountered, this team sergeant thought the community was too arrest oriented. “They think that if an arrest was made, that’s all that counts. They go to beat meetings to get the maps and hear about arrests. They could be doing cleanups or graffiti paint-outs or holding neighborhood forums, but all they care about are arrests.”

Norte’s district commander was extremely knowledgeable about problem solving and was bent on putting it into practice in the district. Other members of the management team also understood their roles and seemed to be carrying out their parts. The district’s civilian administrative manager was thoroughly informed about the program and maintained detailed documentation of the district’s efforts. There was a change in lieutenants while the evaluation was underway. The original team lieutenant was well-informed, had some creative ideas, was a hands-on manager, and held the beat profiles and plans for his beats to a high standard. Norte’s beat team sergeant reported that the lieutenant passed along information from the district management team’s meetings and that the two had a lot of interaction.

More of the Worst

Pride ranked just above the bottom. The implementation of problem solving there was deficient in just about every way. Officers working in Pride felt helpless in the face of the area’s problems; “No problem was ever closed,” one complained. They blamed the area’s problems upon an influx of poor people who were moving into the beat’s east end with housing vouchers, and on youths who lacked respect for authority. They paid little attention to residents’
concerns. They did not think beat community meetings were useful, and they gave only superficial attention to the problems brought up there. Beat team members did not understand CAPS, and when asked about the problem-solving steps it calls for, officers admitted they did not use them because the procedures were too complicated. Officers were also resentful. They resented the notion that their job was to serve residents, and they resented the elements of Chicago’s program that were intended to empower the community. Beat team members believed that residents of the beat’s better-off part regarded them as their personal security force and clean-up service; one commented they expected him to be “the pooper-scooper police” because of the abundance of dog-related complaints in the area. These officers wanted instead to do what they had always done: conduct sweeps, make arrests, stop-and-frisk and tell hangers-on to move along.

It is important to note that race was not at issue. Pride is an African-American community, and those attending beat meetings were almost uniformly black. Based on observations of the 47 officers who attended beat meetings during the study period, 83 percent of the police who appeared at the meetings were African-American as well. Meetings in this area were well-attended, primarily by residents of the better-off section of the beat where there were fewer problems to be addressed. At the meetings, residents described problems, and the police responded by promising to check on them. Beat team officers viewed those who attend as caring about their community, and there was considerable respect between officers and residents. In the survey of residents, those living in Pride ranked fourth highest in terms of their assessment of the quality of police service in their beat. Officers on this beat had just not made a transition to the kind of proactive, problem-solving policing that the city envisioned. As their beat team sergeant put it, “Overall, they don’t like it because it interferes with what they perceive to be their real job, which is to respond to emergency situations and to enforce the law and arrest offenders.”

The sergeant’s view was not much different than that of his officers. Resigned to the community’s problems, he believed that they were too deeply rooted in social problems to be solved. As he noted to his officers at a beat team meeting, “What did you think we can do to improve the quality of life of everyone who lives in the beat, short of dropping a bomb on the east end?” Team meetings were small because, when asked to choose when to schedule them, officers selected a day when most of them were not on duty. The sergeant thought the process of soliciting citizens’ complaints was pointless. “The same people show up at the meetings all the time. They complain about things like missing garbage can lids.” But the problems we observed being discussed—sometimes at length—at beat community meetings were not being
reliably recorded in police records, and there was no discernible link between issues raised at beat meetings and those listed on the beat plan. The beat team leader also did not understand community policing. He thought it was just “public relations.” As he put it, “We’re doing two types of policing. On the west side . . . we’re doing public appeaasement—investigating stuff that isn’t really there—and on the east side we’re patting people down for guns. . . .” He rued the paperwork the program inflicted on him and viewed it as another obstacle to getting any work done. He was also disengaged—he did not really review the team’s paperwork, nor did he provide any leadership or motivation for his officers.

The management team for this district was less notably deficient, but its efforts simply did not “trickle down” to the street level. The commander had good public-relations skills. He was attentive to his district’s advisory committee, went to beat community meetings and saw to it that those meetings were well-attended by officers. He was actively building partnerships with civic groups and the local business association. He voiced impressive plans that were well-received at police headquarters but was new to the district and seemed out of touch with what his officers were doing. Before the end of the evaluation period he instituted regular meetings with his beat sergeants and rode with them in their areas to familiarize himself with local problems. However, the district’s administrative manager did not demonstrate much interest in the program. The district’s beat files were useless: they were incomplete, inaccurate, locked up and never used. The lieutenant who served as the sector’s management team leader did understand the program and attended every beat community meeting. He adeptly fielded residents’ complaints, promised police attention and gently reminded community members that they too could assume some responsibility for problem solving. Not many did, however; the survey of residents placed Pride second from the bottom in terms of public involvement in problem solving. Instead, beat meetings resulted only in exchanges of information. The district’s neighborhood relations staff attempted to spur participation in beat meetings, and the liaison officer for Pride played a vocal role at beat community meetings. However, he felt that others resented this: “Some of the beat officers were intimidated by me, because a lot of them were not into CAPS the way they should be. Sometimes I feel like I should be less aggressive.” The foot patrol officer who worked in the beat was left out of team and community meetings, even though he wanted to attend and was familiar with many local merchants and their concerns.

Old Guard resembled Pride in many ways. Both were predominately middle-class African-American communities, although Old Guard was more uniformly better off. One difference between the two was that officers in Old
Guard really cared; they were well-known to activists, tried to respond to complaints raised in beat meetings and were dedicated to serving residents. As one activist noted, “The police go out there and do the things we ask them to.” More than 90 percent of officers who attended beat community meetings in Old Guard were themselves African-American, and several activists reported that they had become good friends with beat team officers. At meetings, officers were quick to respond to incidents that were brought up, describing the very traditional things they would do in response. Officers discussed residents’ concerns at their own team meetings, and there usually was good follow-up on them. However, no semblance of the problem-solving model was in evidence. Complaints were not analyzed nor categorized as problems; there was no particular strategizing beyond initiating more patrols and arresting or ticketing violators; and there was little resident involvement after their complaints were registered at the beat community meetings.

Like Pride, Old Guard had leadership problems. The beat team sergeant was cynical about the program and ridiculed it. At the same time, he had only a superficial grasp of problem solving, and we had to explain to him what a beat plan was. He neither led the team in problem solving nor monitored his officers’ efforts to do so. He did not know the beat very well, nor the people who lived there. In addition, he thought beat community meetings were held far too frequently, because “people seem to be complaining about the same things, and they have other ways of contacting police.” To him, Chicago’s community policing effort was a paperwork program so “. . . they can drop 4,000 pounds of paper down and say, ‘See! Look at what we’ve done!’” He went through the motions to comply with requirements of the program that he could not avoid. Problem solving was not very far along in Old Guard, and there was little public involvement despite the fact that this largely stable, home-owning area had a great deal of inherent capacity for problem solving.

Fiesta’s beat team members seemed frozen in time, doing the same job they had always done, seemingly untouched by the department’s new directives. The officers adhered to a very traditional definition of police work. Their tactics remained unmarked by the problem-solving training they received. Their response to social disorder along the beat’s bustling commercial strip was to chase away drunks, panhandlers and apparently homeless people when they gathered. Unlike almost everywhere else, they did not even appreciate the service-delivery component of the city’s problem-solving effort. They did not want to be bothered with collapsing sidewalks or open fire hydrants. “Everybody complains to us. Why can’t the community call their alderman to complain? What do potholes have to do with police work?” Their attitude was apparent in data on the delivery of city services. Over a two-year period, Fiesta ranked number one among the study beats in terms of the volume of graffiti
cleanups by city crews. This was consistent with the high rating given graffiti problems by residents of the area. However, only three-tenths of one percent of those cleanups were triggered by a special service request from the police department.

Fiesta’s officers held the community at arm’s length, as many police officers traditionally have, and they fretted—as police often do—that the community did not understand them. For many on the beat team, community policing was a public-relations program; they certainly were not against that, but they did not see how it should affect their actual work. As one officer noted, “I love to talk to people. The older guys have been doing CAPS forever. They’ve been doing exactly what the city wants. It’s the young guys that don’t want any part of it. They want to chase bad guys.” (Like other team members, this officer equated community policing with talking to people.) The officers thought that the problems facing Fiesta were beyond the control of the police, but that both residents and “downtown” had the unrealistic expectation that they could actually do something about them.

Active residents, on the other hand, reported that Fiesta’s officers downplayed their problems and scoffed that they “lacked severity.” They reported that beat officers had adopted an “us versus them” mentality if their efforts were questioned, but that police were not particularly interested in the community’s problems. The police were friendly; in fact, community leaders were pleased with the familiarity and ease of informal contact they had with members of the beat team. But in formal beat-meeting settings, officers sat apart from the community with their arms folded. Few police officers spoke Spanish, which redoubled any other gaps between them and the community; in a beat that the census classified as more than 90 percent Latino, observers at beat meetings set the percentage of Latino officers at about 25. Beat community meeting participation in Fiesta was low; in the most recent year, an average of 16 residents attended per meeting. Those who attended did not come to meetings very often during the course of a year, perhaps due to the fact that not much happened at the meetings. As a community leader described it, “They weren’t doing it right, anyway. There was no co-chair at the meetings, no agenda. . . . When the police department started running beat meetings, they stopped involving the residents and changed the location of the meeting. They turned the meeting into the police standing at the front and taking complaints from the community.” At none of the meetings we observed was there a clear verbal or printed agenda. Volunteers were never called for, and sign-up sheets were never passed around to solicit workers for a project. The area’s community organizations and many service agencies had access to police via the district’s advisory committee and were not represented at beat meetings. Business owners and storefront organizations received special
attention from foot patrol officers, but these officers were not part of the beat team and did not appear at community meetings.

The beat sergeant in turn held his officers at arm’s length. He did not encourage them to accommodate the program, and he did not challenge them to take any problem-solving initiatives. In response, his beat team officers did not step forward to work with the community. He gave them no instruction, despite the department’s hope that sergeants would “coach and mentor” their officers. He had a good understanding of the program’s requirements but was very hesitant to impose it on his officers. “I don’t want to burden my officers with excessive paperwork and responsibility. I don’t want to pressure my officers,” he noted. He wrote and submitted his beat plan with minimal input from his officers. The plan featured what he dubbed “strictly criminal-activity problems,” but the area’s visible social disorder was not addressed. To outsiders the plan looked fine, but not surprisingly, beat team officers did not give any extra attention to the problems it identified, and some did not know what they were. The team’s meetings were short, featuring quick updates on events with no officer input. They were run so tightly that there was no exchange of information or strategy development; the sergeant quickly choked any off-agenda discussion. He did not deem problems voiced by residents at beat meetings significant and did not give them any special notice. This supervisor freely voiced his opinions: “Nothing hits the core of police priority problems. We don’t prioritize the beat community meeting problems because they aren’t a priority, but we take care of them.” The mechanics of running the beat were carried out; the team leader knew the rules, held the required community and beat team meetings and completed the paperwork, which looked fine. But this beat team sergeant did his job by going through the motions.

The commander of Fiesta’s district was knowledgeable about the program, and he worked well with members of his district’s advisory committee. He had a lot of constructive ideas about how to address youth and quality-of-life problems in his district. Responding to complaints by business operators, the extensive disorder along the area’s main business strip was one of the commander’s priorities, although that was not reflected in Fiesta’s district plan. Other district staffers were not so attentive, however. The neighborhood relations office played only a minor role in implementing problem solving, and the sergeant running the office was notably disinterested in it. On the other hand, foot officers working in the area (who were not part of the beat team) picked up a lot of the slack. A lieutenant serving as the sector management team leader described himself as “old school,” and was quick to note “I’m in the twilight of my career.” During the evaluation period he was replaced by a
younger and more motivated lieutenant who was much more supportive of the program.

As we observed in many areas, important contributions were made by the district’s foot patrol officers. In Fiesta they were particularly enthusiastic about problem solving, and they were repeatedly singled out for praise by community activists. Foot patrol officers were also in close contact with the area’s thriving business community and available by pager. However, as we also frequently observed, they were not considered part of the beat team, did not attend team meetings, had no role in the beat’s implementation plan and were not asked to attend beat community meetings that occurred off their shift.

Rating the Beats

These vignettes describe the beats that fell toward the top and bottom of a ranking of the extent to which the city’s problem-solving program was in place in each area. These rankings were composites combining rankings of five different sets of activities: management activities by the district management teams; supervisory work by the beat team sergeants; problem-solving efforts by the beat team officers; districtwide actions to involve the community; and the quality of beat plans drawn up reflecting (in theory) the involvement or oversight of all of those participants. Each of the five rankings was in turn created by rating several specific program elements. At the most specific level we did not make fine distinctions. Raters simply classed each beat’s performance in one of three categories: excellent, passable and failing. This procedure enabled us to score the extent of program implementation in all 15 beats.

The ratings were based on personal interviews with officers, beat team leaders, neighborhood relations sergeants, district administrative managers and commanders. Evaluation staff members also rode around the beats with team members and made their own independent observations of each area. They attended community gatherings, beat team meetings and monthly district advisory committee meetings. They also inspected paperwork on file in the district stations and attended administrative meetings. In addition, evaluation staff interviewed business operators, local activists and organization leaders, and attended neighborhood meetings. Staffers sat in on meetings in which headquarters personnel reviewed district and beat plans. Their detailed notes were reviewed centrally by several readers, who rated the standings of all 15 beats on all program elements, which are described in detail below. The ratings were then reviewed again by the entire evaluation staff, and a consensus decision was made about the three-point rating of each beat on each program element. Summary scores combining the specific elements of each analytic
dimension were then calculated. This was the point at which finer and clearer distinctions emerged between the beats, and they were used to cluster and assign a final rank.

Several factors complicated these assessments. Descriptions and ratings presented here reflect what we observed over a seven-month period, but the city’s program was constantly evolving. Some administrative moves were made to speed program implementation while the evaluation was under way, but they had not been in place long enough for us to assess their effectiveness. Staffing changed over time, and in some beats there were significant leadership changes—and thus new people were in place who were less sure of their jobs—just before the evaluation began. Some of the laudable activities we observed were in place before the city’s community policing program began. In a few beats, positive efforts by police who were not part of the beat team—including foot officers and neighborhood relations personnel—were well-received by the public, and their efforts masked inattention by beat officers to their new duties. In some areas, community members turned out for beat meetings without much effort by police, and they got involved in their own problem solving without their support. But the real purpose of the evaluation was not to calculate the fraction of beats that were performing well or badly. Instead, we documented what the program really looked like in beats selected to represent styles of residential communities in the city. We looked to see where the program was progressing nicely and where it had not come very far. We then used comparisons among the profiles that emerged to illuminate some of the reasons for successes and failures we observed.

**District Management Teams.** District management team ratings took into account four different aspects of program administration. The first was the extent to which commanders understood the department’s philosophy and new protocols. Those teams with a high score on this factor understood that significant changes were called for in “business as usual” in the department; that the goal was to create partnerships with community residents and other city agencies; that information sharing with the community was a “two-way street;” and that problem-solving strategies needed to be developed jointly with their new partners. Those who received a low score mostly thought the program was a “warm and fuzzy” public relations effort designed to make civilians feel better about the police. We also rated the commanders by the extent to which they provided vocal support for the program when working with their officers as well as when they were in public. Commanders’ knowledge and support tended to go together; the two measures were correlated +.73.

Two ratings were made of the mid-level managers’ contribution to the program. Beats in which lieutenants leading the sector management team
actively reviewed beat plans, provided feedback on them and visibly supervised their beat team sergeants received a higher rating. Among the lowest-ranked lieutenants were those who rarely consulted with their sergeants, skipped reviewing beat plans, provided neither feedback to their sergeants nor information from district management team meetings and rarely attended beat community meetings. Another rating took into account the extent to which the district leadership was aware of and actively managed beat team activities. Districts where sector leaders or even commanders attended beat team meetings, made recommendations or helped their sergeants get needed resources, requested updates on problems or the success of strategies implemented, and were knowledgeable about what was going on in the beats got higher scores.

Each of these four factors was equally weighted in the final assessment of each beat. The average correlation among the four aspects of program administration was +.47, indicating they all generally identified the same beats as high or low in terms of the contribution of district management to implementing problem solving.

**Beat Team Sergeants.** Beat team sergeants’ contributions were assessed along five dimensions, using seven measures. Leadership was assessed using three measures: the extent to which sergeants understood the department’s philosophy and new protocols, provided vocal support for the program and expressed enthusiasm about it when working with their officers as well as in public. Sergeants who understood the program and their own new responsibilities resembled the better district commanders; those who did not particularly feared letting the community help set police priorities and thought that community policing was a public-relations gimmick. Supervisors who received a low “vocal support” rating included those who belittled the program or announced that it was not doing any good and could never work. Genuinely enthusiastic beat sergeants were easy to spot at beat team and community meetings and around the station house. They liked their new responsibilities, cared about doing a good job and appreciated the new tools and resources at their disposal. Low-scoring sergeants were not convinced that the program offered much and felt harried by their new responsibilities. The average correlation among these three ratings was +.83. Because ratings pointed quite uniformly to the same sets of leaders, they were combined to form one leadership component in the final assessment of each beat team leader.

Full and equal weight was also given to each of four other factors. The first was the extent to which the team leaders encouraged compliance with problem-solving procedures and paperwork. In lower-rated beats, sergeants felt harassed by paperwork and were unwilling to impose completion of the required forms on their officers. Sergeants rated near the top found ways to
keep their records in good order while exhorting their officers to keep their beat planners up to date and to report back on their progress on problems identified in the beat plan. Sergeants were also rated on the extent to which they encouraged their officers to engage in specific problem-solving tasks using the analysis model. High scores were given to sergeants who made efforts to steer officers in this direction and expressed their appreciation when team members conformed. Their beat team meetings often featured brainstorming sessions that were intended to foster more creative and systematic thinking by street officers. In lower-rated beats, the meetings could not end quickly enough and officer participation was discouraged. These sergeants mostly thought that the problem-solving model was too complicated to actually use in practice.

We also examined whether team leaders encouraged their officers to target the priorities established in the beat plan. In beats receiving a high score, sergeants actively pushed their officers to pay attention to the priority problems identified. This included calling for reports at beat team meetings about what was being done about the problems and regularly encouraging officers to keep after them. In lower-ranked beats, officers often did not know what the official priorities were and “did their own thing” on patrol without much guidance from their supervisor. The final aspect of the beat leaders’ performance rating was the productivity of their beat team meetings. As we pointed out in Chapter 3, the notion that beat policing is a team activity that runs around the clock was introduced as part of the problem-solving package. Team meetings were to bring together officers from all shifts in order to identify priority problems and develop strategies for addressing them. Productive team meetings were well-attended (surprisingly, whether officers attended meetings varied a great deal) and energetic, with virtually everyone present playing an active role. Plans were debated before they were finalized, and officers felt free to add or criticize ideas. Sometimes experiences of other beats were discussed. The average correlation among the five components of the final score was +.77, so they consistently identified the same groups of beat team sergeants.

**Beat Team Officers.** Beat team officers’ activities were judged along three equally weighted dimensions: whether officers actually worked on the problems identified as priorities for their beats; whether they employed at least a rough approximation of the problem-solving model; and whether they developed any creative or nontraditional strategies for tackling problems on their beat.

In the new program, each beat team was expected to choose two to four issues on which to focus their problem-solving energies. These issues were to be identified in their beat plan. We investigated whether in fact they actually worked on those priority problems in any consistent or sustained fashion. For example, police in Solid Mix identified seven priority problems while we were
working there. Six were successfully resolved (by their criteria), and there were clear records tracking how the problems were attacked and the extra resources that were required to deal with them. In Two-Turf, officers closed three of the beat’s five formally identified priority problems within a year. At team meetings, virtually every officer got involved in debates over how best to address these issues.

In terms of the problem-solving model, while beat officers had all been trained to use the crime triangle and five-step process adopted by the department, we held them to a fairly loose standard when it came to assessing their problem-solving practices. Was there any considered deliberation following problem identification, or did they just act instinctively? Did they talk over potential strategies? Was there any evidence that they assessed or made mid-course corrections in their efforts? In Bungalow Belt the process took place during meetings that officers held regularly with leaders of a local crime-watch group. They discussed local problems and strategies for coping with them that could be fielded by both police and the group on its own. In Norte, the day-watch beat officer (on this shift officers worked alone in safer areas) kept careful records in his beat profile, and was quick to take advantage of the new problem-solving resource when the city attorney assigned a prosecutor to assist officers in his district. He had good records on troubled buildings in his beat, several of which were associated with problems that had been formally identified as priority issues. The officer and prosecutor quickly developed a plan for evicting bad tenants in some, and demolishing an abandoned building.

The third factor that we rated was whether beat officers were actually employing any creative—or at least nontraditional—strategies for solving problems. This was one of the aspects of the new program that did not surface often. Most beat teams held to tried-and-true tactics, including patrolling, ticketing and making arrests. Some of the innovation witnessed involved communication and cooperation with new civilian partners, including school principals and local merchants. Teams also promoted citizens’ efforts, such as “positive loitering” projects and neighborhood marches. In Middle Classes, police coordinated the efforts of the alderman, real estate developers, members of the local school council and beat residents to solve one problem. The average correlation among the three ratings of beat team officers was +.65, so they also generally identified the same sets of beat teams.

Efforts to Involve the Community. Beat teams’ efforts to involve the community were also rated using three equally ranked measures. The first assessed the productivity of each beat’s community meetings. Meetings were scored as being productive if interchanges regularly took place between police and residents regarding beat problems and what was to be done about them. We also watched for whether police reported back to residents on the status
of problems discussed at previous meetings or on their efforts to do something about them. In Two-Turf, for example, the beat sergeant felt that making community meetings “pay off” was the best way to encourage participation. So officers there kept careful track of each issue that was brought up at beat community meetings. Problems were discussed individually at beat team meetings held immediately afterward, and action plans were agreed upon. At each community meeting, team members reported back on what they had done about problems discussed at the last meeting, and on what they believed the status to be at that moment.

The second measure assessed whether officers engaged in any community-outreach efforts, including attempts to inform the public about beat community meetings or other events. We also noted instances in which officers took the initiative to develop a good relationship with community residents. In Solid Mix, officers visited the homes of recent burglary victims and encouraged them to attend beat community meetings. In Two-Turf, officers and a group of residents brainstormed about how to improve attendance at beat community meetings and decided to try a new location that would be more accessible to many residents; attendance went up. In Middle Classes, police included their active and knowledgeable civilian beat facilitator in the beat team’s private meetings. In another diverse area police worked hard to ensure that proficient translators (not just someone present who would volunteer) were available for beat meetings. It is important to note that we tried to assess police efforts to involve the community in problem solving independently from their success of doing so, for as noted in Chapter 6, there was tremendous variation across the beats in their latent capacity to get organized and involved.

Third, we rated whether police involved residents in some way in problem-solving efforts. This joint endeavor is one of the most sophisticated elements of Chicago’s problem-solving program, and it was another instance in which we found little evidence of success. We rarely saw ongoing working partnerships, but we did uncover some precursors to joint police-community action. An example was Two-Turf, where residents and police together organized marches against street prostitution. There were also instances of full-blown partnerships in action, as in Inner City, where police worked closely with residents to address problems with a building owned by an absentee slumlord. Together they gathered crime data and reports about specific problems in the building, worked with the city inspector and saw that the landlord was convicted and served several weeks in jail on a criminal housing neglect charge.
Quality of the Beat Plan. Finally, we rated the quality of the beat plan filed by each of the beats on two criteria. The first was whether the plan was well-conceived, addressing what were (in our view) the real and obvious problems in the area, and whether officers had engaged in the analytic steps in which they had been trained. Some of the most highly rated beat plans specified a role for other city agencies, special units within the police department and community organizations. As we saw in the beat profiles presented above, others were thrown together at the last minute to meet deadlines, without input from team officers and without attention to issues raised by the public at beat community meetings. The completeness and logic of beat plans was assessed by reviewing the material stored in each beat’s master file at the station house.

The second component of the measure was the extent to which problems identified in the plan matched community assessments of what the beat’s real problems were. Beats receiving a low measure on this rating scale had drastic discrepancies between the public’s view (as revealed by the survey and interviews with local activists) and police priorities. In some instances the police knew this but disregarded public opinion, often because it did not prioritize “real crime.” A harder call for us was when problems got left off plans because districts feared that “downtown” would not consider them important enough. At least once we observed a district management team having to justify listing a “non-problem” because it was a community priority. At the other end of the scale, Inner City’s priorities (primary among which was the area’s wide-open drug sales) were very much in line with residents’ concerns voiced at beat community meetings. Police there were very respectful of residents who attended, and were quick to defer to their knowledge. When our observer asked whether a resident had exaggerated a problem, an officer replied, “She lives right there. She probably has a pretty good idea what’s going on.” A day-shift beat officer was widely known in the area and fostered close relationships with merchants, residents and school personnel. He believed the new program “... has really given me the opportunity to get to know people on the beat and do things for them.” The correlation between these two ratings was only +.29, the lowest of all the evaluative criteria.

Table 7.1 presents the final implementation ranking of the study beats, from one (the best) to 15 (the worst). Rankings were based on a summary score that equally weighted contributions of the district management team, the beat team leader, beat officers, community involvement efforts and the beat plan. Categories in which beats were placed were not arbitrary. Instead they reflected the results of a statistical clustering of the beats using the five separate measures. Beats cast together in each cluster resembled one another more closely than they resembled beats in other clusters. Rankings presented in Table 7.1 are based on each beat’s total summary score.
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TABLE 7.1
Beat Rankings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Excellent Programs</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Struggling Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Two-Turf</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Blue Collars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bungalow Belt</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Potpourri</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Norte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inner City</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Solid Mix</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fiesta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Middle Classes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Old Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rebuilding</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Property Values</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Stir Fry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Southtown</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Figure 7.1 is a dendrogram depicting the clustering process. At the far left are individual beats. In a series of sequential steps shown from left to right, the beats that were statistically most similar were merged successively into clusters. The further to the left that beats or clusters joined, the more similar they were. Bungalow Belt and Norte were the most similar across the five ratings of program components, so they linked first. Once joined, their score became the average of their values on the five measures. This two-beat cluster was quickly joined by Two-Turf, which closely matched the cluster’s average. These beats then collectively resembled Inner City, but after that remained distinct from the other beats for a long series of merger calculations. Based on the summary score they also were the four highest-ranked beats and so were classified as “excellent.” Closer to the bottom of the list, Blue Collars and Potpourri had very similar programs that were distinct from the other areas, and these we dubbed “struggling” beats. At the very bottom, Fiesta, Pride and Stir Fry closely resembled one another and as a group closely resembled Old Guard. With the four lowest total scores, they constituted “failing” programs. “Reasonable” programs were a more mixed lot. Rebuilding and Middle Classes most closely resembled one another, while Southtown and Property Values were joined by Solid Mix.
FIGURE 7.1
Clustering Beats by Implementation Scores
Programs characterized as excellent in Table 7.1 enjoyed solid leadership by beat team leaders, and their officers often were enthusiastic and innovative. For the most part their beat plans and profiles were up to date and quite frequently used by officers as well as team leaders. Priority problems identified in the beat plans were regularly addressed. Beat team meetings were well-attended, and officers spoke up. Team members also regularly engaged in community-outreach efforts. While sophisticated joint problem solving was not necessarily in evidence in these “excellent” beats (it was rare everywhere), information was consistently and effectively shared between police and residents at beat community meetings. Paperwork did not seem to be a big problem here; in fact, police working in some of these beats developed their own forms, including special ones for addressing problems brought up at beat meetings but not yet prioritized. Additionally, officers made frequent use of intradepartmental request forms so other units and outside resources could be brought to bear on beat issues. City services request forms were also frequently used and appreciated by beat team members, in contrast to officers closer to the bottom of the list, who were likely to see even these forms as yet another imposition.

For the most part, the beats with reasonable programs were operating with many elements of the city’s program in place, but aspects of their work were underdeveloped. While beat team members might have been conscientious, well-intentioned and open to the program, they might not regularly have been working on priority problems or making efforts to involve the community. Beat team sergeants might have had a good grasp of problem solving and might have kept administratively up to date, but they failed to give feedback or guidance to their officers. While most officers seemed to be vested in the program, sometimes an entire watch group might have been evading involvement. Younger officers often preferred aggressive and action-oriented tactics over community work, and toward the bottom of this category the police were still largely incident-driven.

A beat team in one of the two struggling areas gave lip service to the concept of problem solving but showed little evidence of understanding it in any meaningful way; in the second area beat team members were clearly neutral about the program. In neither case was much of an effort made to explore the benefits of new systems or resources available to them, and community involvement was seen by too many officers as an imposition. In both cases beat leadership was lacking; although the two sergeants appeared to understand the program. One beat team leader was simply unenthusiastic, and the other was unsuccessful in rousing his group of rather unimaginative
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Their beat plans were incomplete and virtually never consulted. Officers frequently did not attend to issues raised at beat community meetings and sometimes failed to report back on their efforts when they did.

In the failing areas, few elements of the program had been implemented or even attempted. Officers serving there often felt hopeless about their ability to make a dent in problems in their beats, and their supervisors felt that community policing would not change matters—except to burden their officers with more responsibilities and unnecessary paperwork. They relied almost solely on traditional policing tactics, and beat plans were largely ignored by the beat team. Community meetings often were resented by officers and perceived primarily as forums for residents to criticize the police or demand that they waste their time on non-crime problems.

What Got Problem Solving Going?

The factor that most clearly played a role in shaping the extent to which problem solving was implemented at the beat level was leadership. Leadership accounted for a great deal of the variation among the beats, and the closer leaders were to officers in the field, the greater impact they had. While there was considerable variation among the district commanders included in this study, that variation did not account for as much as did beat team sergeants’ mentoring. As we have seen, how well commanders understood community policing and how vocal they were in support of the program was fairly visible to our observers and other members of the district management team, but it was not closely mirrored by what beat sergeants or their officers did, or by their community-outreach efforts. Lieutenants who directly oversaw the beat team sergeants had more impact than commanders did. There was a great deal of variation in the way these managers did their jobs. Some carefully reviewed beat plans and gave their sergeants feedback to improve them, and others barely got their signatures on the bottom of the page. A few (but not many) studied them intently enough to identify generic problems that cut across beat boundaries. Some made a practice of occasionally attending beat team and community meetings, while others did not know much about what went on there. Across these 15 beats, how actively lieutenants managed their sergeants and officers made a difference in what they did.

The key actors were the beat team sergeants. What they did accounted for a great deal of the variation in whatever their officers managed to accomplish. We assessed beat officers’ performance by whether they actually worked on the problems identified as priorities for the beat, employed the steps that make up the problem-solving model and developed nontraditional strategies in tackling problems on their beat. We observed that they did these things a lot more frequently when their sergeants pushed them to focus on key problems,
stressed problem solving, clarified the importance of following department protocols and held productive team meetings.

All of this is reflected in the rating data. Given the decentralized nature of police work, it was no surprise that the ratings for beat-team officers and even their sergeants were relatively disconnected from their districts’ upper management. Both of those ratings were correlated only +.48 with the district management team score. The biggest “disconnect” was in Fiesta, where the commander ranked near the top, but the beat team sergeant and his beat officers both ranked fourth from the bottom of our list. Fiesta’s management structure simply was not in place. The district’s neighborhood relations sergeant was doing nothing to push the program along, and the lieutenant overseeing the team was not interested in expending much energy on that task, as his career was nearing an end.

The closest associations were between the ratings of beat team sergeants and their officers; the two summary scores were correlated +.82. The largest discrepancy between them was in Old Guard. There the largely African-American officers cared a great deal about beat residents, but their sergeant—who was white—did not know the beat, did not know the residents and did not like the program. The quality of each beat’s formal plans was also rated, and their scores were more closely linked to those of the beat team sergeants(+.80) than they were to the district management teams’ scores (+.61). Officers’ ratings were correlated +.70 with the community involvement measure (Old Guard again stood out) and with the beat team leaders’ +.66.

The beat sergeant in Solid Mix exemplified the positive role that sergeants could play in pushing the program along. A “tell-it-like-it-is,” “no-punches-pulled” veteran, he was proud of the program he had put together. His team meetings included rapid response and tactical officers who worked in the area, who were frequently called on to provide information and field support for the beat officers. At a team meeting we observed, the beat sergeant and sector lieutenant promoted the value of beat plans and stressed that the team should be working on the area’s priority problems. He indicated that he wanted to see their strategies recorded in the problem-solving documentation. This was followed by an energetic brainstorming session in which his officers were quick to exchange ideas and challenge traditional tactics. He was chosen by his commander to pilot the district’s plan to visit recently burgled households to encourage residents to get involved in local projects. He reported, “I don’t want to brag, but the reason I was given this assignment was because the commander knew it would get done.” Later he noted, “As an officer I felt CAPS was just more bullshit,” but he came to value it.

Where beat team leaders did not provide leadership, not much happened. Recall the position of the sergeant in Stir Fry: he did not want to press his
officers, because they already felt too “put upon” by community policing. He did not think it was worthwhile to analyze or strategize about his beat’s problems, because they were “societal.” In Pride, the sergeant thought problem solving interfered with his officers’ “real jobs.” Fiesta’s beat team leader did not want to “pressure” his officers; he avoided giving them direction or instruction and was wary of the paperwork. In Old Guard, the beat sergeant ridiculed the program, which he really did not understand at all. The relationship between leadership and team performance was not perfect; in Old Guard there was a significant gap between ratings of the beat team leader and his officers. The largely African-American officers cared about the beat’s residents and worked hard to respond to public concerns, but in the absence of any coaching they reverted to the most traditional of tactics and were incident-driven rather than problem-oriented in their efforts.

Each of the four beats whose programs were judged “excellent” had beat team sergeants who ranked among the top third of the 15 beat team leaders. (The fifth beat earning a top beat team leader score, Property Values, had significantly fewer neighborhood issues for the beat team to rally around.) The beat team sergeants who were “on board” and regarded the program positively managed their officers quite differently than did the disheartened sergeants cited above. Enthusiastic leaders frequently acknowledged the importance of civilian involvement and the new roles and responsibilities of beat officers. They respected beat team officers’ ability to contribute and respond to challenges. Two-Turf’s beat sergeant said he looked forward to “being just a little cog in the wheel,” admitting, “I kind of wish the program was further down the road so we didn’t have to do as much recruiting, but people would just show up.” He went on to add, “I think as this program goes on, it’ll flow easier,” and he also noted how “really proud” he was of his beat officers and the work they did. This type of respect for beat officers was often held by successful beat team leaders and was frequently mirrored by their subordinates in the most dynamic teams. Bungalow Belt’s beat team sergeant, who was also very successful, was somewhat of an exception to this general rule. He looked at his role differently because he was not convinced that officers were uniformly receptive to the program: “Twenty percent love community policing, 20 percent hate it and the remaining 60 percent have a ‘wait-and-see’ attitude. They go along with it because they have to.” His success lay in his ability to consistently communicate that his officers had to go along with the program. Successful beat-level programs were fluid and had varying formulas, but the role of beat team leader had a considerable impact on whether the elements present combined productively.
Did It Serve Those Who Needed It Most?

Ratings presented in Table 7.1 enable us to examine how effectively problem-oriented policing was being delivered in different kinds of city neighborhoods. In particular, the ratings can be compared to the indicators of community capacity developed in Chapter 6 to assess the extent to which police efforts reinforced existing capabilities or supplemented the efforts of communities struggling to cope with their problems. The question is, was problem solving in Chicago helping better-off areas get better off, or was it helping worse-off places get better off? High-capacity places were already well-positioned to defend themselves through politics, their downtown connections, their community-organization infrastructure and the apparent willingness of people to intervene to control youths and protect community members. In these beats residents already sympathized with the police and turned out in larger numbers to their beat meetings. Those who came got involved in a wide range of problem-solving partnerships because of the breadth of their linkages with each other and the community. In our surveys, residents of high-capacity beats reported that they were not so overwhelmed with problems, which were fewer in number there.

Figure 7.2 summarizes the findings. The horizontal axis situates each beat in terms of its capacity, measured by combining the informal social-control, organization-involvement and political-capacity measures described in Chapter 6. They were highly correlated with one another, and in combination they rank each beat on its collective capacity to manage local conditions. The vertical axis arrays each beat on its police implementation score, placing those where problem-solving policing was most advanced near the top and those where it was not very far along near the bottom. Note that Figure 7.2 includes three beats that were not surveyed, although we intensively studied police operations there: Middle Classes, Inner City and Southtown. They were included by using statistical techniques to estimate their community capacity score using factors that were highly correlated with capacity, including voter turnout (which was also in the regular index), family structure and home-ownership. Those three beats are presented in italics in Figure 7.2 to denote their more tentative position.

Figure 7.2 suggests that there was no direct association between community capacity and program implementation. Rather, worse-off places were about as likely to enjoy well- or poorly implemented programs as were their better-off neighbors. This is quite different than what we observed in Chapter 6, which examined the distribution of various community-capacity measures. There, measure after measure pointed to advantages shared by the same set of communities. Benefits of informal social control, organizational involvement,
FIGURE 7.2
Community Capacity and Police Problem Solving
political mobilization and downtown connections all seemed to accrue to the
same fortunate areas. They were also the most racially homogeneous, stable,
home-owning and affluent beats. However, it was not the case that better-off
places with a home-grown capability for handling problems were also the beats
where police problem-solving efforts were most firmly in place. Only
Bungalow Belt scored near the top on both dimensions. Middle Classes and
Property Values fell into the “reasonable programs” category and were also
ranked high on their capacity for self-defense.

To the contrary, four of the most highly rated beats—Two-Turf, Norte,
Inner City and Solid Mix—were among those with relatively little community
capacity for problem solving. In those areas, police supplemented the efforts
of communities with relatively limited capabilities for resolving their own
problems. While they varied, none of the communities in this quadrant was
particularly well-off. In terms of income, three of the four were in the bottom
quarter of all beats in the city; only residents of Solid Mix (just missing being
among the top 40 percent of beats) were doing well. The most highly rated
beats were not older, stable communities; all were in the bottom half of the
study beats in terms of age and length of residence.

The distribution of successful and unsuccessful programs also did not
closely mirror the heterogeneity or homogeneity of these areas. Those with the
best programs were often quite diverse. Only African-American Inner City had
a high homogeneity index; Two-Turf and Norte housed significant numbers
of African-Americans, and Solid Mix was home to whites, Latinos and small
numbers of a variety of other ethnicities.

The beats in this quadrant also did not have strong enough connections
downtown to demand better police service. They all scored low on political
mobilization, and none had much capacity for extracting resources from the
wider community. They were also not places where police and the public just
naturally got along. In the survey, all these beats were in the bottom half on a
measure of perceived quality of police service; Two-Turf was at the very
bottom, and Norte was just two positions higher. One lesson of this study is
that public perceptions of the quality of police service provide an uncertain
guide to the actual quality of policing at the beat level, at least as we observed
it in action in these 15 communities. Finally, these were not places with
easy-to-handle problems, where successes were easy to rack up. The survey
measure of gang problems placed Two-Turf as number one, and Norte
ranked third. On the survey measure of drug problems, Norte placed second
and Two-Turf was fifth. Only Solid Mix scored in the bottom half of beats on
both measures. Inner City was not surveyed, but it was in desperate condition.

There were left-out places as well. Near the bottom of the implementation
index, in the lower-left quadrant of Figure 7.2, lay three communities that were
in great need of help but that were not getting much: Potpourri, Fiesta and (especially) Stir Fry. All were poor and disenfranchised, and they were among
the five beats with the largest volume of problems, as identified by residents in
the survey. But they had struggling or failing problem-solving programs.
Finally, two African-American beats—Old Guard and Pride—lay in the
quadrant where communities had a high capacity for self-help, but where
community policing was not very effectively implemented. The irony is that
these beats were among the most supportive of the police, ranking third and
fourth, respectively, just below Property Values and Bungalow Belt. They were
racially homogeneous (although a large section of Pride was not well-off) and
were largely served by African-American officers. Each also had established
downtown connections and a high capacity to get mobilized politically, but the
police had not managed to get the job done there.
Conclusions and Recommendations

This book examines how one city formulated and implemented problem-solving policing. We set out to assess the success of Chicago’s program and how well it fit the needs of its neighborhoods. Early chapters described the problem-solving approach the city developed and how it reorganized the police department and municipal service agencies to support that model. Then we described the neighborhoods selected for detailed examination and the character and magnitude of problems there. On the community side of problem solving, we analyzed residents’ capacity to deal with those problems on their own by exercising informal control, getting involved in local organizations and mobilizing politically to extract resources from the wider community to control the ways in which government and private development efforts were implemented in their area. We judged that six of the 15 areas studied had significant capacity to deal with problems on their own, but that the remainder would need assistance. On the police side we gave the highest rating to only four beats, while six of the 15 were not fielding effective programs. From district commanders to officers on the street, understanding and commitment to the program varied, as did their ability to get problem solving going even if they wanted to. This chapter summarizes what we found about police and the community, and then advances some recommendations about both sides of the problem-solving equation.

Communities and Problem Solving

What we learned on the community side was challenging. In a nutshell, we found that the native, “homegrown” capacity of study neighborhoods to defend themselves largely mirrored the pattern of privilege and privation that characterizes American society in general. Poor and internally divided beats
found it more difficult to translate their common values into practice, while better-off beats had an easier time.

The linchpin of our model of community self-help was neighborhood capacity. This concept encompasses three distinct dimensions: individual, collective and political. The study areas varied in the extent to which residents felt their neighbors would intervene to protect the safety or property of others, the density of organizational ties that bound them to one another and their ability to make their voice heard downtown. It turned out that these capabilities went together strongly—so strongly that in ensuing analyses we deployed a single measure of community capacity that represented them all.

Community capacity was strongly rooted in the social and economic makeup of the study areas. We would like to think of helping out, joining up and turning out to vote as choices that individuals are free to make, but like many features of life these choices turned out to be heavily structured by race and class. Capacity was strongly linked to affluence. It was greater in police beats dominated by homeowners and higher-income households where people lived in single-family homes as married couples and two-parent families. It was also higher in racially homogeneous areas—including as many African-American as predominately white beats—while it was weaker in diverse places.

Not surprisingly, community capacity was as strongly linked to the types of urban ills that have sparked interest in problem-solving policing. Residents of high-capacity beats reported many fewer problems than their counterparts and they were less fearful of neighborhood crime. And, as a warning that mounting an effective program might be difficult, residents of low-capacity beats were much more negative in their views of the police who worked there. Among beats surveyed, only two gave police at least a “good” rating; those were the only two well-off, predominately white beats: Property Values and Bungalow Belt.

We found that community capacity was linked to resident involvement in Chicago’s new problem-solving program. First, residents turned out at a higher rate in high-capacity areas. Relative to the size of the adult population, more of them trekked to their monthly beat community meetings in places that rated high on our capacity index. Second, in high-capacity beats, those who came were more representative of the community. In low-capacity areas, whites, homeowners and better-off residents played a disproportionate role in beat meetings. This is important because inevitably only a small fraction of the population is very likely to attend a beat meeting. This lends significance to the issue of whether the major interests of beat residents are all represented by those who do come—interests that we indexed by race and class. Third, beat meeting participants got more involved in actual problem solving in high-
capacity areas. They were more likely to contact a broad spectrum of local actors—from political leaders to their friends and neighbors to work on problems with them. One of the mechanisms lying behind these links was the important role played by local organizations. People who belonged to organizations attended meetings more often while areas that were honeycombed with organizations tended to attract residents from all corners of the beat, and individuals who were linked to their neighbors through a web of organizational affiliations were those who got involved in problem solving between the monthly meetings.

A related challenge was how to deal with issues raised by problem-solving policing in beats characterized by race and class diversity. They had more problems, and we observed residents blaming one another for them—something we rarely saw in homogeneous places where problems could be blamed on nameless “outsiders.” These beats were less supportive of the police, who were sometimes forced—for example, by decisions about sites in which to hold public meetings—to choose sides. Beat meetings rarely represented the population as a whole in these areas; they were usually dominated by the better-off faction who lived in the part of the beat where meetings were eventually held.

It is important to note that, to a significant extent, challenges created by diversity were self-imposed; they were social constructions imposed by the police department on pre-existing communities. Certainly, many neighborhoods in Chicago are by important measures “naturally” diverse ones, even in terms of local definitions of neighborhood boundaries. However, in the process of crafting beat boundary lines that met a statistical standard based on calls for service and that offered free movement to patrolling police vehicles, Chicago police also imposed a common fate on residents who frequently considered themselves to be members of divergent neighborhoods. Moving from west to east, Pride was composed of well-off homeowners, moderate-income apartment dwellers and poor people living in deteriorating circumstances. Middle Classes was divided between African-Americans and whites who lived in community areas with differing names that were bisected by an almost-impassible railroad viaduct and a new system of cul-de-sacs blocking one-time thoroughfares in white areas. One consequence of this police-imposed diversity was that where community meetings were held within such beats took on great symbolic and practical significance. Residents of the neighborhood in which it was held tended to turn out in larger numbers, while those who had to come from “outside” were underrepresented.

Beat boundaries also intersected at odd angles with boundaries associated with other ways—most notably political ways—of getting things done in Chicago. We frequently observed beat boundaries that cut across the districts
of two or even three different city-council members. This was not unavoidable, for there were only 50 council members, and 279 police beats could certainly be more practically divvied up among them. Aldermen frequently succeeded in packing their wards with voters who were homogeneously like themselves. One consequence of this political diversity was that beat team officers and community activists had to coordinate their efforts with multiple aldermen, and they sometimes did not represent the same political factions or enjoy equal connections within the city agencies that could get things done for the beat. Another was that split-up beats could not constitute a sizeable fraction of an alderman’s core constituency, and they often looked elsewhere for their supporters. Beat boundaries also had nothing to do with attendance zones for the city’s decentralized schools, even though gangs have a great deal to do with safe passage to and from schools and the level of violence within them.

Like everything involving diversity in America, the implications for problem solving are complex and conflicting. Should police beats be redrawn to more closely reflect current race and class boundaries, or is diversity—and especially the process of citizens confronting the issues it raises—actually something to be encouraged? How should police respond when gentrifiers try to use them to drive out poor residents and encourage more of their own to take up residence when their individual complaints are often valid? Should community members have a major say in how and where new beat and district boundaries are drawn? From the view of many police, this prospect is frightening, for well-organized groups intent on capturing more influence over police activities in their area would leap enthusiastically into the redrafting process. Many could be tempted to gerrymander contending populations and organizations into other beats. It is also customary to avoid a clear overlap between police and political jurisdictions. One of the first acts of a reform chief brought in to shake up policing in Chicago in the early 1960s was to redraw police district boundaries so that they no longer clearly fell in the bailiwick of powerful ward bosses, who had captured control of staffing and operations in many of them.

Issues raised by variations in capacity and diversity are significant because community members are supposed to make important contributions to problem solving. As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, Chicago’s strategy was not just a policing program. Instead, the intent from the outset was to use problem solving to harness the energy and resources of beat residents and apply them to public-safety projects. However, energy and resources are differentially distributed across the city’s landscape. We feared that, as a consequence, the better-off were likely to get better off, and the poor were likely to again get left behind in the struggle to master the daunting problems facing American cities near the century’s end.
What Can Be Done About Community?

This and other research on neighborhood-oriented policing suggests a number of strategies that could enhance the capacity of communities to hold up their end of the problem-solving partnership.

Seek Stability. One message can be found among the correlates of community capacity: beats poised to protect themselves were characterized by high levels of home ownership, intact families and low population turnover. Residents of Stir Fry sat at the polar end of this continuum: 97 percent were renters, 40 percent of households were composed of unattached individuals, while 69 percent had moved there in the previous five years. This recommends projects that encourage development of stable communities, primarily by promoting home ownership and neighborhood investment. This is the domain of both private developers and the myriad non-profit housing corporations that have emerged in the United States since the 1970s. Of course successful problem solving would help as well. Research indicates that crime, social disorder and physical decay all undermine satisfaction with the neighborhood, discourage investment and lead people to think about moving away. Families actually move first, leaving isolated and less-well-off householders behind (Skogan, 1986; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981).

Secure Intimate Spaces. The physical makeup of many of our study beats either facilitated or retarded development of community capacity. One important factor was housing style: beats where residents mostly lived in low-rise or single-family buildings were easier to organize and mobilize. Pride and Old Guard were homogeneously African-American, but almost everyone who came to beat meetings or reported in the survey that they were involved in block clubs or community organizations came from the single-family and duplex parts of the beat. At the other end of the spectrum, most residents of Stir Fry lived in large buildings with small apartments, once-elegant brownstones now cut up into kitchenless sleeping rooms, and missions and single-room occupancy hotels that could fairly be characterized as “flophouses.” Residents of lakefront highrises in Potpourri proved impossible to organize, and political activists around the city tell us that they long ago gave up trying to get “cliff dwellers” involved in local politics.

The physical layout and visual features of the structural environment were important as well. The quiet, safe part of Pride featured wrought iron fences and gates around larger buildings; block club signs and matching lampposts marked single-family homes as part of a united community. The untroubled section of Middle Classes was walled off from traffic and casual passers-through by both natural barriers and a series of cul-de-sacs cutting off all but a few vehicular entrances into the area. A quiet strip along the lakefront edge
of Potpourri was isolated from the remainder of the beat by dead-end and one-way streets, and a small park. Traffic circles filled the center of several busy intersections in Solid Mix, forcing cars to slow and check for oncoming traffic as they passed through them. While some doubt the appropriateness of “gating” communities or blocking public access to public spaces, the truth is that people who are able to do so believe that it pays off. Poor communities should be empowered to experiment with security arrangements that make sense to residents. In reality, these barriers are not crenelated castle walls. Generally, they serve to calm the flow of vehicular traffic, draw defining edges that help residents identify their common fate and signal to outsiders that they are entering space that “belongs” to someone and is not fair game for plunder.

**Spread the Word.** More could be done to encourage resident involvement in beat meetings and in problem-solving projects. Our survey of beat residents found high levels of program awareness: it averaged 71 percent and did not vary much from area to area. Awareness of beat meetings was lower, 43 percent, and about 9 percent of those we interviewed reported that they had attended at least one beat meeting. Spreading the word about the program was the responsibility of both local police neighborhood relations offices and City Hall’s CAPS Implementation Office. During the second year of our study, that office spent more than $1.5 million on print, radio and television promotions, and staff members participated in festivals, parades, workshops, marches and rallies to try to increase awareness. This may account for the high level of program recognition, but the continued shortfall in actual participation in meetings was noticeable in some areas. While overall program awareness was 43 percent, it was only 27 percent in Solid Mix and 28 percent in Potpourri. In Solid Mix, only 4 percent of those who had heard of CAPS reported attending a beat meeting.

There are many advantages to structuring participation in problem solving around beat meetings like those held in Chicago. Meetings of this type provide a regular venue for participation, for they generally are held every month on the same day and at the same time and place. Most meetings are widely advertised and held in public facilities or church basements—locations well-known to residents. Beat meetings are also a safe venue for participation. An average of seven police officers attended the meetings that we observed, and it was possible to get an escort to and from the district’s station. At the outset of the program some feared that gang members would attend and intimidate other residents, but that did not happen often or repeatedly, and police were prepared to deal with the contingency. Recall that officers in Bungalow Belt passed problem-identification forms around during beat community meetings that could be filled out anonymously by anyone leery of speaking out. While they varied in other respects, those who attended treated each other in civil
Conclusions and Recommendations

fashion. Only one of the 81 meetings that we observed broke out in acrimony, and when residents did complain about police, the subject matter was almost always that there were not enough patrols or that cars were too slow to respond to 911 calls.

A bigger problem was that many beat community meetings were not very well-run. Our observers judged that police leadership was “very effective” in only a quarter of the meetings, and civilian leadership fared worse. Overall, they judged that 15 percent of the meetings floundered, while only 23 percent were very effectively led. Police dominated any discussions of neighborhood problems, and 75 percent of the actions reported at the meetings had been taken by police. Officers were supposed to bring crime maps from the department’s crime analysis system to beat meetings, but they failed to do so 38 percent of the time. Later, after the conclusion of our field work, the department began new training initiatives for selected personnel. Civilian beat facilitators and selected beat team officers from every beat were trained in problem solving, beat plan formulation, facilitator roles and capacities (including the kinds of police department information they could have access to), beat-meeting leadership and how to get help if things did not run smoothly. These sessions began with a presentation of our evaluation findings. Beat team sergeants received more training on problem-solving procedures and paperwork, and on holding effective beat meetings.

Resident training in problem solving is another facet of spreading the word. Despite the citywide training effort of 1995-1996, too often we observed residents using beat community meetings to pass problems on to the police for them to solve. For decades police have emphasized that citizens should act as their “eyes and ears,” calling quickly when something needed to be addressed. Police officers present at these meetings called for some variant of “serve as our eyes and ears” at 81 percent of the beat meetings we observed; they only exhorted residents to take prevention measures at 22 percent of meetings and reminded them that they needed to be more self sufficient at 24 percent. And on their side, the most frequent observation (mentioned by 42 percent) that residents made about police was that they needed to respond more quickly when called. Overcoming this inertia will take time and effort.

Stir Up Residents. This strategy lies close to our definition of community capacity, which is made up of three dimensions that are affected by the extent to which neighbors are connected to one another. The first dimension we considered was individual reciprocity in the form of intervening to nip crime and disorder in the bud. This kind of “protective neighboring” may be the most difficult component of community capacity to transplant when it is lacking. Whether residents observe these conditions and are in a position to intervene is highly contingent on situational factors. They may be right to fear
they would expose themselves to danger, especially if they are called upon to act alone. In safe Property Values, a majority of those interviewed thought their neighbors would intervene to break up a fight; in gang-ridden Two-Turf the figure was 9 percent. Studies of intervention behavior suggest that familiarity or some sense of connection with victims or perpetrators is an important determinant of who will act and who will not. This connection could be facilitated by neighborhood-organizing efforts and through institutions like churches and schools that bring together local residents who share common interests. At best we could hope for the kind of solidarity that we sometimes saw develop via beat meetings: when residents attended, they saw their neighbors; they chatted with them over coffee afterward; phone-tree lists were developed and distributed by activists; participants interacted with one another on the street; and they began to recognize one another at other events. Chapter 7 reported that this kind of networking among beat meeting participants was one of the strongest correlates of getting heavily involved in problem solving.

Organizational involvement was the second dimension of community capacity. As we pointed out in Chapter 1, communities need organizations that identify and articulate common values of its members and that facilitate collective efforts to achieve them. Without them, aspirations shared by a large majority of an area’s residents may never be realized. In other research (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997) we found that not all organizations are productive in this regard. Organizations that typically participate in police problem-solving projects are locally oriented, informally organized volunteer groups that define their missions in terms of neighborhood improvement. Secular organizations were the most likely to get involved in crime-prevention projects, but there were exceptions. A significant fraction of churches serving Chicago’s African-American neighborhoods sponsor not-for-profit housing, economic-development and job-related programs, and sometimes they are a significant force in stabilizing neighborhoods that fall into their orbit. Many district advisory committees in Chicago’s African-American communities feature large and active pastors’ subcommittees. On the other hand, churches serving the city’s Latino community are distinctively uninvolved in such secular activities; recall the 30 churches in Two-Turf, none of which got involved in Chicago’s program. We also found that organizations that provide individual clients with services—often supported by charitable grants and government contracts—did not see what was in it for them, and they also did not get involved in turf-based problem solving.

Finally, our analysis places heavy emphasis on the political component of community capacity. As noted in Chapter 7, while the notion that neighborhoods can “pull themselves up by their bootstraps” is appealing, the
realities is that many beats we examined here need outside help. They do not have the resources to stabilize themselves nor to secure their space. They cannot control intrusions by developers or government agencies intent on remaking their community in ways they oppose. They cannot deal with the ravages of poverty and violence without services. We judge that insider connections are most important when it comes to securing government grants and redevelopment efforts, and in controlling implementation of public and private development in the area. Voter turnout and support for the winner are more important in securing steady and predictable service from city agencies. In this light it was fortunate that some needy yet anti-administration areas could use the service-delivery procedures developed to support problem solving and bypass aldermen who were not in favor with city hall.

Police and Problem Solving

What we learned about the policing side of the problem-solving equation was equally challenging. Because our focus was on problem-solving policing as an organizational strategy to support tactical projects rather than on cookbook recipes for solving a particular problem, we examined how the organization itself had adapted to this new vision for policing. In the end, we gave a failing grade to 40 percent of the beats we studied. Problem solving in those areas ranged from struggling to woeful, and this summary focuses on them because collectively they were a problem that needed to be addressed.

Police culture presents a difficult target for reformers. It is rooted in the organization of policing and the work that officers are required to carry out, so it is unlikely to change in response to pep talks or general orders. The problem is not just the “blue curtain” that shields police from public view. Change-making efforts by supervisors and managers at all levels within the organization are just as likely to be stymied as are the plans of civilian reformers. While police culture has a long list of manifestations (see Sparrow, Moore and Kennedy, 1990), the relevant one that we observed in action was summarized by the officer who told us police just wanted to do “what they signed up for.” Officers did not want to be “pooper-scooper police,” and they said so. At the outset, dealing with peoples’ concerns sounded too much like social work, and having all of the public’s problems dumped on them sounded like too much work. They feared they would be held responsible for things they felt they could not control but only considered the limitations of their most traditional tactics.

Management. Part of the problem was inadequate management and supervision. It would be fair to characterize the administration of many American police departments as poor. Police departments are hard to manage;
the bulk of the work gets done by officers working alone on the street, and the ways in which they spend their time are variable and highly dependent on factors that lie outside their control. Under terms of the union contract with patrol officers, district commanders in Chicago had no control over who worked for them or on what shift, they could not demote or fire them, and they could only punish them for violating one of the department’s specific rules of conduct. Like in other cities, the department’s personnel policies worked against improving the situation much. There is no lateral entry; managers at all levels have worked their way up the ladder from the bottom, spending most of their career on the street. Their peers and most of their friends are in the department, some working under them. Often they have no management training and a not very impressive educational record. They are primarily motivated by fear of losing their management position (but not their job; they have civil-service tenure), though that will likely happen only if headquarters ferrets out corruption or blatant misconduct among officers. District commanders do not lose their positions if crime or disorder goes up or if problems do not get solved. At this level we observed no disagreement with the course in which the Chicago Police Department was going; commanders understood the party line being expounded downtown, and they were not going to be found on the wrong side of it. They did vary greatly in the extent to which they really understood what the program demanded and how much differently the department was supposed to operate. Those in the dark believed it was a public-relations program, which was fine with them.

The situation was quite different at the level of beat team sergeants, who we identified as the real lever of change (or lack thereof) at the beat level. Commitment to problem solving varied a great deal at that level, and sergeants who thought the program was a waste of time were not particularly reticent about their views. Ill-led beat teams featured poorly attended, boring and brief team meetings. In those beats there was no effort to keep officers focused on official priority problems, which were not well-crafted in the beat plans. Community priorities were often disparaged. Paperwork generally was complete and accurate only in the best-led areas. Some sergeants who did seem to understand and support the program were still unwilling to demand that their officers do anything different and contented themselves with the paperwork. The best sergeants had well-organized files, and several developed their own special documents to keep track of problems they wanted to keep after. They also helped identify and foster better civilian leadership at beat community meetings. Lieutenants who oversaw beat team leaders were highly variable in their attentiveness to program implementation. The best among them attended beat team and community meetings, reviewed the activities of their sergeants, contributed ideas of their own and reported to their sergeants
about what went on at district management team meetings. Others approved hastily concocted beat plans and did not notice that action was never taken on them.

The officers generally did what they were told. Few had a real appreciation for the department’s formal problem-solving process, but they had received only a little training. In beats where sergeants kept after them, officers worked on priority problems and complaints registered at beat community meetings. Few were particularly creative in their approach, and most defined their contribution as patrolling more in response to public demand. A significant minority even resisted completing service request forms, because they did not think it was their job. Beat officers got along well with beat meeting participants in “pro-police” areas, but elsewhere they sat in the back with their arms folded.

One reason headquarters could not know all this was going on was that the documentation system they developed broke down. Officers and supervisors alike really disdained 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.” Beat plan implementation logs and intra-departmental support services request forms were considered by many to be punishment for accomplishing something, because they were supposed to be filled out and filed with the beat plan in order to document actions taken or resources required to work on prioritized beat problems. So officers simply did not fill them out. The starting point of the decentralized planning process envisioned by program managers was the beat plan form, which was to identify priority problems—one per form—on which the beat team was going to work. Headquarters had set a deadline by which every beat was to have its plans in place; when we looked in the files they were there, but as much as two years later we found problem descriptions that had never been updated nor documented as resolved, and often a single beat plan form was the only piece of paper in the folder. In other cities there has been discussion of evaluating the effectiveness of problem solving by systematically following up on formally approved beat plans to see whether there had been any successful action, but in many of Chicago’s beats this system would not reveal much that was useful.

District commanders and managers higher up in the department also did not know what was going on because the organization could produce no measure of whether any problem solving was going on, and there was no way to gauge the effectiveness of any about which they happened to hear. A rule of organizational life is “What’s measured matters.” As noted in Chapters 4 and 7, while attempting to transition to a new style of policing, Chicago continued
to measure only what formerly mattered. This included answering calls, making arrests and issuing citations for serious traffic offenses. These continue to be important aspects of police work, but while they were being counted, officers were being exhorted to do other things: attend community meetings, talk with residents in order to identify problems, study computer-generated crime maps and take seriously matters that fell entirely in the hands of civil courts. “What’s counted counts,” and none of those new tasks was. From the point of view of many officers, the new tasks simply increased their workload, and they were already too busy. In one of our study districts, management took note when a conscientious beat officer fell short of his expected number of traffic tickets because he was busy with other matters. When it came to problem solving, officers did the things that could be easily monitored, such as attending beat meetings, if assigned (and they were paid overtime for doing so if it was not their shift). But they were less attentive to things that could not be tracked by existing paperwork.

The performance measurement problem was well-understood but never seriously tackled. There was vague discussion about revamping the productivity indicators gathered by the department and reviewing practices for evaluating the performance of individual officers, but nothing got done. In the words of one district watch commander, “Nothing has been implemented—the 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.” Even the simplest issue—that beat officers were not evaluated by their team sergeant, but only by the sector sergeant who worked their watch—was never addressed. Throughout the study period, downtown managers attempted to get useful figures on the extent to which the dispatching system was keeping beat team officers on their beats, but even they could never get a reliable and useful number from the city’s expensive new communications center.

What Can Be Done About Police?

Our field observations and research on neighborhood-oriented policing in other cities suggest a number of strategies that could enhance the capacity of police to hold up their end of the problem-solving partnership.

Leadership and Vision. By the time this study began, the department’s top leaders had accomplished a great deal. A five-district prototyping experiment had long since been completed, and the program was well underway throughout the city. Organizational elements supporting a beat orientation were in place throughout the city, resources had been found to increase the
number of officers to handle the anticipated workload, new roles had been created for a public that was excited about the concept, and a bottom-up planning process had been instituted that promised to allocate resources in response to locally identified needs. During our time in the field the challenge was to make all of this actually work. The pieces were in place; officers merely needed to do their part.

Leadership is an important component of any organizational change effort. In our experience, successful leaders focus on where the organization is headed, rather than on what is wrong with it, and they let everyone else in on their thinking. They try, every day, to do something to push the organization along its new path. They articulate a powerful and unambiguous vision for the future that employees can understand and buy into. The officers’ immediate supervisors can provide the nuts and bolts of the new program; the top needs to provide the vision.

Policing is a labor-intensive human-service occupation that is highly dependent on the skill and motivation of its practitioners, so getting officers to buy into a new program, and not just go through the motions, is important. The way to tackle police resistance to problem solving or community policing, we think, is to start where the police currently are and work to move them toward where they need to be. Rather than being told they are going to love problem solving, ways in which it links to what they want out of their careers should be pointed out. One hook is public service. During the 1970s there was a great deal of research on why police sign on for the job. The general conclusion was that what attracted recruits was the prospect of exciting work without close supervision that would be honored as a public service while providing a steady paycheck. We could see signs of this in our survey of Chicago officers. The survey hinted that the potential was there to engage officers if the program was properly framed. In terms of public service, officers probably were thinking of the traditional role of the police in responding to emergencies of all kinds when almost 85 percent agreed that “assisting citizens can be as important as enforcing the law.” More than 75 percent endorsed the view that “police officers should work with citizens to try and solve problems in their beat.” Almost 90 percent agreed that “the prevention of crime is the joint responsibility of the community and the police.” Officers also understood how much police rely on the public to identify offenders and solve crimes. Almost two-thirds agreed that “without citizen cooperation, the majority of crimes would never be solved.” Many officers probably could be attracted to a program that would help them be more effective at their traditional tasks, by getting closer to the community, and that would get the attention and support of “good people” in their beat. As noted in Chapter 4, they also disliked how supervision was conducted in the department. Problem-solving policing, in
contrast, values increased officer autonomy, and calls for them to develop their own projects and see them through to the end. Officers engaged in problem-solving policing liked working with their peers, and Chicago’s program emphasized teamwork and more officer participation in prioritizing and strategizing via beat team meetings and community gatherings. Officers believed that no one at the top had any interest in what they thought; problem-solving stresses that the expertise of the department lies in the hands of skilled officers. Finally, there was an increasing amount of user-friendly technology being deployed for their use; and many districts had a coterie of officers who were excited about its potential.

More training was required at the sergeant level—one of the most important in any police agency. A number of sergeants we observed in action were uncertain or wrong about the program and how it was to operate, and only a few clearly sensed the department’s overall vision. Many needed help in making the transition from a command-and-control organization emphasizing what not to do (as specified in the rule book) to one that emphasized making plans and executing them with minimal supervision.

Training. Chapter 4 described the two-day training program the department developed for all patrol officers. While it was professionally conducted and seemingly effective, it should have been just the first step in this direction. Problem solving represents a major departure from “business as usual” in policing. The department initially needed a training program just to introduce the concept and address the insecurities of officers who feared they were being left on their own to implement an untried social experiment. Trainers did that in the two-day sessions, but the department never followed up with the more intensive training and supervised practice that would be required for police to be flexible, creative, imaginative, self-starting, analytical and every other adjective that is appended to the term “. . . community officer.” Sergeants received a bit more training, both before the 1995 effort and later, but even that was limited, and a major part of their curriculum was devoted to mastering the paperwork required by the program—a task not likely to win over their hearts and minds. By the time our field work was completed, the curriculum for rookie candidates at the police academy had expanded to encompass problem solving and community-oriented policing, but it was much too soon for us to observe its effects among officers in the field. The left-out group was managers. District commanders went through training in early 1995, but that was it, and when they were replaced their successors received no training. Directly above them in the department hierarchy stand area deputy chiefs. They were somehow “above” requiring training, it appears, for they knew as little about the program as anyone in the department. Not until 1998 were they taken aside and given a thorough indoctrination.
Monitoring Performance. When police embrace problem solving they adopt responsibility for a new spectrum of activities and problems. Senior managers need concrete measures of the efforts of individual officers, their units and their supervisors in this domain. There are multiple reasons for doing so. One is to document what officers are actually doing. Both department managers and taxpayers should be interested in this question. Another is to encourage compliance with department policies and procedures. Managers and political leaders would like to be able to tie officers’ assignments, pay, promotion and even discipline to indicators of how well they are performing their assigned duties. We do not expect to see this any time soon in heavily unionized parts of the public sector, like policing, but even “shadow performance measures” (like “shadow prices” that can be calculated for unmarketed public goods) would increase the transparency of police operations by identifying what part of the department's budget is allocated to planned activities. It is more likely that performance measures could be used to trigger interventions by supervisors, special training sessions, counseling and other “professional development” efforts to upgrade the quality of service delivered by officers. Performance measures are also a feedback mechanism that helps an organization steer itself, by crediting good performance. Many officers would appreciate seeing some benchmark against which to compare (privately) their own efforts, and the hard working beat officers we encountered would be ecstatic if their department’s annual report included measures of their efforts and accounts of their successes. At the top, performance measures are an important leadership tool. They both set priorities and state what the organization values from its members. What the department publishes in its report and recounts at the annual Police Appreciation Dinner sends a message to officers and politicians. It communicates what the department expects of its officers. Performance measures are not just statements of “how we’re doing”; they are also statements about “what we should be doing.” While counting officers’ activities smacks of the “bean counting” we dismissed in Chapter 1, activities that are clearly related to outcomes the department values should be valued in themselves.

Evaluation measures are needed at the individual, unit and supervisory levels, as these levels present different problems. For example, it has been suggested that departments use sample surveys or self-administered questionnaires to measure perceptions of the visibility and quality of police service in an area or even citywide (Community Policing Consortium, 1998). This would be most effective if conducted over time to assess changes in response to new initiatives. The surveys might not differ much from those conducted for this study, but ours were slow and expensive to conduct, and sample surveys have to be very large if data are required for small geographical
areas or population subgroups. Responses to questions about police are also affected by a long list of factors beside police activity, and it would be difficult to trace the results to officers or supervisors, or even to specialized policing teams. Residents who have not had recent contact with police may not have a very accurate picture of what they are doing.

More promising are direct enquiries about the service delivered on specific occasions, for both the nature of the service and the officers involved can be identified. For example, Houston police experimented with conducting telephone surveys among residents reporting selected offenses to gauge “customer” perceptions of how well their case was handled (Wycoff and Oettmeier, 1993). Other jurisdictions routinely send postcards to citizens who report incidents to the police, asking them a few simple questions about how things went. In Madison, Wisconsin, the postcards are turned over directly to the officers involved in the hope that they will improve their performance without requiring the department to take action based on unsubstantiated comments. This is important, because any attempt to hold officers accountable for scores or ratings that are not certified by experts must be able to survive an inevitable legal challenge. Measures must be technically reliable and valid, demonstrably related to their individual job performance as defined by department regulations and easily understood by a judge. These examples also involve following up on the delivery of traditional forms of police service, and few departments can track who to recontact if the activity involves police-citizen encounters outside the domain of reported incidents. Missions that officers undertake on their own are left out entirely.

Data already collected for other purposes might serve as a rough-and-ready barometer of the organization’s morale. Records of sick days, disciplinary actions, transfer requests and other personnel data can be used to flag problem assignments. Surveys of police officers can more directly track perceptions of the work environment created by new policing strategies. Skogan and Wycoff (1994) found that as Madison’s department reorganized internally to support problem solving, officers grew significantly more optimistic on 13 of 27 hypothesized outcome measures ranging from feedback from their peers to participation in decision making and satisfaction with the department. Department records indicated that absenteeism, tardiness, sick days and disciplinary actions all declined most among officers working out of an experimental police substation that emphasized participatory management and extensive contact with community residents.

But if generating performance measures sounds difficult, linking the results to individual rewards is an even thornier problem. In Chicago, the base pay of patrol officers is based on their seniority, as defined in the union contract. They receive regular salary increases as long as their yearly performance rating
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is above 75 on a 100-point scale. This works without difficulty because it is almost unheard of for anyone to actually receive a lower score. In the words of one seasoned informant, “In 20 years, I maybe saw it happen once or twice. . . . I don’t see that they’re really evaluating a thing.” Noting that he recently received a rating of 94, he observed, “They’re basically good for nothing. If [his sergeant] dropped me from a 94 to an 87, you know I might yell and scream, but it basically doesn’t make any difference.” During 1992 and 1993, there was some discussion of identifying officers who were especially good at beat work and promoting them to a new rank of master patrolman that paid a salary differential, but this was opposed by both the mayor’s budget analysts and the union, which opposes any pay gradation at the discretion of managers.

Monitoring Effectiveness. In addition to monitoring what officers and units are doing now, departments also should strive to assess the effectiveness of their efforts and to find ways to disseminate effective practice throughout the organization. The idea is to develop procedures for judging whether what officers are doing makes any difference to the community and to promote the efforts that are. Recall that this constitutes the final “analysis” stage of the SARA problem-solving process.

The same surveys that gather reports of what citizens think of the police could also be harnessed to measure victimization and fear of crime, and the extent of selected neighborhood problems. Surveys have the vox populi advantage of reflecting views of the public independently of official crime categories or police record-keeping systems, and without the filter of 911 or other formal reporting mechanisms. Likewise, data systems of other organizations may already be churning out figures that are useful. For example, building-vacancy and abandonment rates, building permit applications, drug-related hospital admissions, school-truancy rates and other data collected by public and private agencies on a routine basis can help trace changing neighborhood conditions over time. “Windshield” observations constitute another cheap and direct way of monitoring visible community conditions. Observers driving through an area can fairly reliably spot liquor bottles and beer cans on front lawns, loose garbage in the alleys and graffiti. A district commander in another town told us she monitors whether her community officers are on the job by driving around looking for abandoned cars. And, of course, police agencies routinely gather data on calls for service and recorded crimes. Chicago’s computerized crime-analysis system was designed to turn that voluminous flow of data into intuitively useful information.

The object should be to keep effectiveness analysis simple and cheap, and not to mount a major research project to evaluate every problem-solving effort. In the context of Chicago’s program, the formal beat plan(s) that identify
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Priority problems could form the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of unit problem solving if the plan(s) were carefully constructed and kept up to date. They could systematically be tracked to see which problems get closed, and if by some simple and rapid measure they appear to have diminished or disappeared. We would drop the follow-up forms required of beat officers themselves; punishing action by requiring even more paperwork whenever any work gets done is a losing proposition. Who could conduct these evaluations? The department already has a squad of inspectors monitoring its internal functions. Now they review parking in the district’s lots, make sure officers are on the job, check that station house restrooms are in order and certify that selected forms are being filled out and filed away. Theirs is a fairly dismal job, so it might be worth upgrading the position to one that certifies that the department’s program is actually working.

The results of these assessments could constitute a new knowledge base for problem solving. As noted in Chapter 1, a compilation of results could be used to drive future problem-solving efforts. They could be a new source of expertise, valued because they represent the work of fellow officers. Officers could access them when searching for potential solutions to similar problems. Assessment results could ascertain what had been done in the past, what apparently came of it and who to contact. This body of model practice could form the basis for training programs founded in real-world, local practice. “War stories” constitute an important way that practice circulates in policing, and these evaluation reports could be more accurate and informative than what now passes for local wisdom. The goal should be to move toward a model of “intelligence-driven policing” that supports more effective problem solving.

Chicago’s Hope

Can the city make it work? Many of the program-implementation problems summarized in this chapter were rooted in Chicago’s decision to pursue a “high-risk, high-payoff” problem solving strategy. Most cities have been more modest in their goals. The usual pattern is to form a few special problem-solving squads. Because relatively few officers are involved, the project usually can be staffed using volunteers. If they are not managed directly from downtown headquarters these units are put under someone that the chief has confidence will do a good job and generate success stories. They get a lot of special training and equipment, and access to the department’s deep pockets if they really need it. The squads work on the highest-payoff problems wherever they may be, and they do not have move on until they have secured a solid victory. Chicago, on the other hand, tried to involve every district and every small beat in the program. That meant that they had to use available
personnel they had (whether officers wanted to be involved or not), and they had to manage it using the established bureaucratic structure (whether it was effective or not). Officers assigned to beat teams had just two days of training—several years before our study began. They mostly had to do their regular work while relying on the 911 system to occasionally give them some free time for neighborhood-oriented work. Another common practice around the country is to triage neighborhoods, selecting “likely survivors” for treatment like the most hard-nosed battle physician scanning fields of wounded. In their “Broken Windows” article, Wilson and Kelling (1982) called for focusing on neighborhoods that were on the cusp of spiraling hopelessly downward, not wasting resources on those probably beyond redemption. In that strategy, places that do get special help certainly need it, but those who need it most get none at all. Chicago, on the other hand, was committed to running problem-solving projects in every kind of community and to tackling localized priority problems everywhere.

There was a significant potential risk to involving both the entire department and every community: such an ambitious and far-reaching program might fail for being spread too thinly across too much real estate. The potential payoff of the city’s choice to be inclusive was the increased responsiveness of local government to the concerns of all the city’s neighborhoods as well as increased effectiveness in actually improving the lives of all city residents. The choice Chicago made is evoked in the program’s signature marketing phrase: “Safe Neighborhoods Are Everybody’s Business.”
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About the Book and Authors

Delving into one of the most popular topics in contemporary law enforcement—problem-oriented community policing—this book examines how Chicago’s ambitious plan to remake its police department actually worked in the field. It describes ways in which the city developed its model for problem solving and how it went about training both police and residents to implement it. It follows the key players into the field and describes how they, in partnership, attempted to tackle chronic problems in 15 neighborhoods representing Chicago’s diverse ethnic and class makeup. The areas faced varied problems and had varied capacity to deal with them. The book analyzes the extent to which the police and municipal agencies aided the neighborhoods, including several that were poor, racially diverse and very much in need of police support. Based on extensive data gleaned from residents, officers and official records, the role of police leadership in focused problem solving is examined, and recommendations are offered to improve the ability of police to make community policing work in areas that need it most.

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