

The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy Research Proposal

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Abstract

The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) was created in 1993 to bring police, local agencies and the community together to solve neighborhood crime problems. The program's structure was based on target beats (279 at present) and eight or nine officers were assigned for at least a year to beat teams. These teams were instructed to partner with the neighborhoods they patrolled, identifying and responding to a variety of community-oriented problems. Regular beat meetings were held to bring together police and the public to discuss issues of all kinds. The research question for this study is "Did the CAPS decrease crime rates (specifically violent and property crimes) 10 (2003) and 20 (2013) years after the program's implementation, and if so, how do these changes relate to informal social control, perception of collective efficacy, and level of disorder?"

Hypotheses to be tested include:

- (a) CAPS is associated with declines in violent and property crime rates in 2003 as compared to 1993, and in 2013 as compared to both 2003 and 1993
- (b) Violent and property crime rates are each correlated directly with the level of disorder as measured by the number of 311 calls concerning neighborhood issues (as the level of disorder rises, crime rates rise accordingly)
- (c) Informal social control and perception of collective efficacy are correlated inversely with crime rates

Keywords: Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy, problem-oriented policing, crime rate, level of disorder



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Methods of policing can vary across several continua, such as active to passive and prevention to intervention. Traditional methods were passive in the sense that they reacted to events instead of being proactive (Maguire et al., 2015, p. 73, para. 3). By necessity, this meant that the police spent most of their time intervening in problems that had already transpired. However, since the 1980s, two related strategies, community-oriented policing (COP) and problem-oriented policing (POP), have been adopted and adapted in many locations. Historically, police departments focused on two out of the three primary functions of police, crime control and order maintenance (OJJDP, 2015, p.1, para. 2). COP and POP place more weight on the third function, which is preventing crimes through services to the community. In fact, changing the relationships between the public and police is at the root of both COP and POP. In the wake of recent events in which citizens were killed by police and *vice versa*, the relationship between the two is critical.

In problem-oriented policing, the police department looks for hidden reasons behind crimes, analyzes their component parts, and discovers strategies that will target these underlying variables. The most used problem-solving process is called SARA – scan, analyze, respond, and assess (Porter, 2013, p. 172, para. 2). This process is similar to innovative methods applied in many other fields today (Porter, 2013, p.15, para. 1). Although the model is used for internal police analysis of community problems, it may prove more effective if neighborhood residents are involved in the discussions (Bullock & Tilley, 2009, p. 121, para. 2).

In Chicago, the last few years have seen crime rates rise to higher levels. For example, the number of murders in the first quarter of 2016 was 72% higher than the corresponding time period in 2015, and shootings increased by 88% (Chicago Tribune, 2016, n.p., n.para.). Property



crimes have shown striking increases too. However, since 2001, property crimes and murders have dropped to just over half of their original rates, even taking the 2016 increases into account. The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) was developed by the Chicago Police Department (CPD) and launched in 1993 to target crime and solve crime problems in several Chicago districts. However, the program, whose structure was based on target beats, later expanded to cover the entire city. Law enforcement officials were instructed to cooperate with neighborhood residents and local government, with the goal of identifying and reacting to various community-oriented problems. Other components of CAPS included the creation of advisory committees to review and prioritize problems, the hiring of additional civilian personnel, and coordination of municipal services to improve infrastructure issues (Lombardo et al., 2010, p. 587, para. 5). The addition of rapid response cars to aid beat officers in responding to 911 calls made it easier for team members to work with non-emergency 311 calls (Chicago Police Department, 2016, n.p., para. 1-3).

