

1996 BEAT MEETING AND CITIZEN TRAINING

PARTICIPANT STUDY

by

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The Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium is coordinated by the Institute for Policy Research (formerly the Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research), Northwestern University. It also includes faculty and students from Loyola University of Chicago, DePaul University and the University of Illinois-Chicago. It is supported by grants from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority and the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.

BACKGROUND

Chicago's community policing program (CAPS, for Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy) provides several avenues for citizen input. Perhaps the most unique is the city's beat community meetings. CAPS's model of community policing calls for building information-sharing, problem-solving partnerships between police and the community. Several important features of the program were put in place to facilitate the development of closer working relationships between police and beat residents. Among those were the formation of special beat teams and the inauguration of a dispatching policy designed to keep officers on their beats to give them the time required to engage in proactive problem-solving efforts. In addition, beginning in 1995 police began to meet with residents on a regular, frequent and well-publicized basis throughout the city. Officers who came to meetings included members of the beat team who patrolled the neighborhood. At the meetings they were to exchange information, identify and prioritize local problems, develop strategies to address them, and begin the process of identifying police and community resources that could be mobilized to support problem solving. The delivery of city services was tightly linked to the program.

Based on reports completed by officers who attended the meetings, we estimate that between January 1995 and April 1996 attendance accumulated to more than 80,000 at CAPS-related meetings. During that period our observers attended a sample of 165 beat meetings. There they observed the dynamics of the meeting and took note of who attended and what they had to say, using a standardized observation form. They also distributed and collected a three-page self-completion questionnaire during the course of the meeting; we had arranged in advance to be on the agenda in order to make that possible. The questionnaire, available in English and Spanish, included 19 questions about the roles and responsibilities of police and citizens under the CAPS problem-solving model; two questions about beat community meetings; some demographic variables; and a check-list measure of involvement in community organizations. At the end they were asked to volunteer their first name or a nickname, and their telephone number. These data formed the basis for selecting the sample for the follow-up study of beat meeting participants described in this report.

Similar data were collected in a parallel study of the city's citizen training effort. Even during CAPS's prototyping period (May 1993 through the fall of 1994) it was apparent that police officers were not the only ones who had to adopt new roles with the advent of community policing; the public also had things to learn. When CAPS was first introduced in five prototype districts, community residents who became involved were frustrated because they did not know what was expected of them. Beat meetings often became gripe sessions, leaving both police officers and community residents frustrated as well as at a loss about what to do in response to the grievances that were

broached there. Although there was dialog about problems that existed in the beat, residents continued to rely on police to solve them in traditional fashion.

Residents' confusion about their new roles and responsibilities under CAPS suggested the need for further training. This conclusion was shared by both the police and the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS), an independent organization founded in 1980 to promote community involvement in public safety. Planning for a Joint Community-Police Training program (JCPT) began in earnest when it became clear that the city would eventually award a contract enabling CANS to develop training materials and hire civilian trainers. JCPT training began in May 1995, although it stopped and restarted with new curriculum materials later that year. The original plan called for training to progress through the city's 279 police beats by the end of 1996, but the project quickly fell behind schedule. Training began in the original five CAPS prototype districts, and in others selected to represent Chicago's diverse neighborhoods.

In its original design the program included an initial orientation session, plus two to three follow-up problem-solving training sessions on each beat. The orientation sessions were two-hour open meetings designed to familiarize beat residents with CAPS. They were to provide citizens with basic information about how CAPS should work and educate them about their roles in implementing the program successfully at the neighborhood level. Problem-solving sessions were more advanced than orientations, featuring a hands-on approach that provided participants with practical experience in problem solving. As part of our evaluation, a three-page survey instrument was distributed at the beginning of each orientation session. The questionnaire was identical to the one distributed at beat meetings except for the title at the top of the page. And, as was the case for the beat meeting study, the data provided the basis for selecting a sample of training participants for a follow-up survey.

At the heart of both studies was a similar question: Was any problem solving going on? Did residents who came to beat meetings and JCPT orientation sessions do anything about the problems discussed? Did they rely on police to solve their problems for them? Or, did residents identify priorities for themselves and try to do something about them? Who got involved, and who did not? What did they do? In the case of JCPT, the survey also enabled us to gather additional data on the training program. How many training sessions did participants attend? How did they learn about the training? What did they think of the sessions? Did they try to get others to attend training? Because building "capacity"—participants' ability to share newly acquired problem-solving skills so neighborhoods will be able to sustain CAPS involvement independently — was one goal of the process, we also asked about their own efforts to teach other people about problem solving, or to get neighbors involved in local projects.

To answer these questions we conducted surveys of beat-meeting- and training-participants. We drew samples of participants who completed questionnaires at JCPT orientation sessions and the beat meetings that our observers attended. We selected the samples from among white, African-American and Hispanic participants who gave us a telephone number at the end of the self-completion questionnaire. We waited approximately four months after each meeting to recontact them by phone. The remainder of this report presents details about these studies. The next sections document our questionnaire design strategy, sample selection, procedures for weighting the data, and data preparation. Appended to the report are the following documents:

1. beat meeting and JCPT orientation session questionnaires, in both English and Spanish
2. beat meeting follow-up questionnaire
3. training orientation follow-up questionnaire

A few follow-up interviews of participants were necessarily conducted in Spanish. These were conducted by the graduate student who developed the translated version of the questionnaire.

The data described here are available from the National Criminal Justice Data Archive, housed at the University of Michigan.

Questionnaire Design Strategy

An important methodological issue was the selection of the recall period for the surveys and our strategy for bounding the recall period. In general, a shorter survey recall period is optimal. Asking respondents to retrospect over a brief and recent period of time usually maximizes the accuracy of their recall. For segments of the JCPT study a brief recall period would have been preferable in order to gain the most accurate impressions of the training sessions. However, even then we would have to wait for a month or two (the true period was unknown and highly variable from beat to beat) to give orientation session participants a chance to attend a full selection of follow-up problem-solving sessions on their beat before they were reinterviewed. More importantly, we were principally interested in participants' problem-solving efforts, so we also needed to afford them sufficient time to get involved in those activities — and to have a chance to succeed or fail at them — before they were recontacted. This argued for a longer recall period.

We were also faced with a practical issue. The revised JCPT curriculum that we were evaluating did not become standard practice before October 1995, yet we needed to complete the study and write a final report by the end of August 1996. The recall period had to fit within that data collection, analysis, and report-writing schedule.

Added to that, our field observers could only attend community beat meetings in the sample beats when they were scheduled — on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. We chose a four-month recall period in order to accommodate all of these realities. From the point of view of tracking the problem-solving successes of participants this was undoubtedly too short. Most respondents indicated that their problem-solving efforts were still underway; this was the case for 51 percent of the beat meeting participants we interviewed, and 53 percent of the training participants.

Our sampling strategy gave us a natural bounding point for the beginning of the recall period, the meetings at which respondents filled out the original questionnaires from which we got their telephone numbers. They were asked about events and activities between that meeting and the interview. Coupled with a four-month recall period, this gave each respondent approximately the same sized “window” of time to think about in order to answer our questions about their problem-solving activities. At the beginning of the interview we reminded respondents of the reference meeting and its date, and also reminded them during the course of the interview that we were interested in events that had transpired since that beat meeting or training session.

To follow up on problem-solving efforts, early in the questionnaire we asked respondents to list “the most important problems that have affected your neighborhood over the past four months.” We indicated that we were interested in “up to three problems,” and wrote down verbatim descriptions of their replies. Each response was later coded for analysis. The interviewers then asked three pages of questions about each problem. Respondents were asked about their involvement in problem-solving efforts, who they partnered with, how helpful their partners were, and how successful they felt they had been. These questions were repeated for each listed problem. Many of the analyses for our reports were organized so that the unit of analysis was the problem rather than the respondent. For example, the 354 training study respondents described 693 neighborhood problems. For those analyses, respondents who mentioned two problems were thus represented twice in the data, those who mentioned three problems were represented three times, and those who mentioned no problems at all were dropped from problem-based analyses.

Sample Selection

Table 1 traces the flow of the sample cases during the course of the study. Because this was a four-month follow-up interview, sample participants were selected on the basis of when they originally attended a meeting and were surveyed, so that they would elgibly fall into the re-interviewing period, which began February 1, 1996. The sample was drawn from questionnaires that arrived from the field on an unpredictable basis, depending on beat meeting and training session scheduling, and the number of people who turned out. We needed to manage the volume of properly-timed cases to match our interviewing capacity, and we initially planned to select a

racially and ethnically balanced sample of participants. Most questions about public policy in Chicago hinge on race, so we wanted large enough subsamples to look separately at different groups. This also drove our decision to focus the study only on whites, blacks and Hispanics, for we knew that too few persons of other backgrounds would be represented in the data.

Respondents were eligible to enter the training sample if they completed a participant questionnaire between October 1, 1995 and January 31, 1996. For beat meeting participants, the sample “window” included those who completed a participant questionnaire between October 1, 1995, and February 16, 1996. Our goal was to complete interviews with 300 beat meeting participants and 300 training orientation participants by May 31, 1996, but we exceeded that by two weeks. We hoped to complete interviews with a balanced sample of 100 whites, 100 African-Americans, and 100 Hispanic participants for each study, but too few Hispanic participants appeared during the time frame for the study. However, because we had sufficient staff, we interviewed more than the anticipated number of training participants while awaiting the accumulation of a sufficient number of questionnaires from beat meeting participants.

As summarized in Table 1, during the time frame of the study participant questionnaires were completed by 633 beat meeting and 787 training attendees who were either white, black or Hispanic. From these lists we excluded the second of 19 duplicate completed interviews — individuals who attended two of our targeted meetings, evidenced by the fact that they provided us the same telephone number on each questionnaire. We used the meeting that they had attended first as the reference event. Five participants were excluded because participants were under age 18, as were three elderly participants because of our difficulties in interviewing them. The most frequent reason for excluding respondents, however, was their unwillingness to give us a telephone number. Thirty-six percent of beat meeting participants and 26 percent of JCPT training attendees did not include a telephone number on their initial questionnaire. (Figures derived from Table 1.)

In addition, some respondents were later excluded from analysis after they had been recontacted. Three beat meeting participants were excluded because they indicated in the interview that they neither lived nor worked in Chicago; a total of 13 respondents to both studies were non-residents, but 10 of them worked in the area where they participated in a meeting. Five beat meeting and two training completions were excluded because the respondents were recontacted less than three months or more than five months after they completed the first questionnaire. While our goal was to interview respondents on the four-month “anniversary” of their participation, difficulties in recontacting them inevitably delayed some interviews, and a few were mistakenly interviewed too early. An examination of the empirical length of the recall period indicates that, on average, beat meeting respondents were interviewed four months and 14 days after their initial meeting and training participants were interviewed

an average of four months and nine days after their initial training session. After eliminating the seven completions that fell outside the acceptable time frame, the earliest a beat meeting respondent was contacted was three months and nine days after the meeting, and the latest was after five months and 27 days. The earliest a training participant was interviewed was three months and two days after a session, and the latest was five months and 27 days afterward.

Table 1		
Beat and Training Sample Call-back Methodology		
	Beat	Training
Follow-up period	10/1/95 to 2/16/96	10/1/95 to 1/31/96
completed initial questionnaires during follow-up period and of selected racial groups	633 Total 263 African-Americans 268 Whites 102 Hispanics	787 Total 363 African-Americans 293 Whites 131 Hispanics
provided a telephone number	401	583
completed interviews	299	361
discarded-out of time frame	- 5	- 2
discarded-did not follow skip pattern	- 0	- 5
discarded- b/c respondent neither worked nor lived in Chicago	- 3	- 0
usable completed interviews	291	354
distribution of usable interviews	128 African-Americans 124 Whites 39 Hispanics	123 African-Americans 170 Whites 61 Hispanics

Another five cases were discarded because interviewers failed to properly follow the skip pattern in the questionnaire and asked respondents about meetings that they did not attend. These cases were all excluded because the inconsistencies left us in doubt about the quality of the data. In another instance we detected that interviews were being partially falsified or sequences of questions were being skipped. We recontacted almost all of that interviewer's completions and examined them carefully for internal consistency. One question sequence that the interviewer apparently skipped was deleted for 57 cases; other parts of those questionnaires appeared to be valid, based on the verification interviews.

Survey completion rates for the two studies can be calculated in several ways. The most favorable rates compare the 291 useable beat meeting interviews and 354 useable training interviews with denominators that include only initial questionnaires completed by white, black and Hispanic respondents meeting the following criteria:

- they supplied telephone numbers

- they worked or lived in the city
- they were older than 18 years of age

For this calculation, the respondents we failed to reach were those who:

- gave a nonworking phone number
- could never be contacted
- refused to cooperate in the interview
- whose interviews had to be discarded due to interviewer difficulties
- were not interviewed in the appropriate time frame

On this basis, the completion rate for the beat meeting study was 73 percent, and the completion rate for the training study was 61 percent.

On the other hand, if we calculated completion rates based on all of the meeting participants who completed an initial questionnaire during the targeted time period, including those who did not supply us with a telephone number, the rates stood at 46 percent for the beat meeting study and 45 percent for the training study. Some participants in this category may have been concerned about their privacy, but many others failed to complete the last page or so of the questionnaire at all, signaling that they probably were not given enough time to work their way through the instrument.

The completion rates would be even lower if we were able to tally training participants who did not fill out an initial questionnaire. In some instances this may have happened at training sessions where trainers failed to distribute or collect questionnaires, or did not have enough forms. Other potential non-respondents were participants who could not read or write in either English or Spanish. We also were unable to include those who could not read or write at all, a significant fraction of residents — and perhaps participants — in heavily Hispanic beats. We chose not to include attendees who did not specify their race or ethnicity as white, black, or Hispanic. These accounted for 8 percent of beat meeting participants and 9 percent of training

Table 2
JCPT Training Sample Profiles

VARIABLE	WAVE 1 (%)	unweighted WAVE 2 (%)	weighted WAVE 2 (%)
Age	13	12	12
17-29	50	50	48
30-49	22	23	23
50-64	15	15	17
65+			
Education	20	15	17
No high school	17	18	21
High school/GED	6	6	6
Technical/vocational	29	25	24
Some college	29	36	32
College graduate			
Home Owner	56	61	60
Yes	44	39	40
No			
Income	22	16	19
less than \$10,000	17	17	18
\$10,000-19,999	30	33	34
\$20,000-39,999	20	22	19
\$40,000-59,999	11	13	11
\$60,000+			
Race	46	35	46
Black	16	17	16
Hispanic	38	48	38
White			
Gender	59	57	54
Female	41	43	46
Male			
Years of Residence	30	27	25
less than 5	26	31	29
5-14	18	18	21
15-24	25	24	26
25+			
District	6	5	6
4	9	5	8
7	3	1	3
8	5	5	5
10	9	6	9
12	16	10	16
15	5	7	5
22	10	13	10
23	20	31	20
24	17	18	17
25			
Total Cases	787	354	354

We could not meet our goal of interviewing equally sized samples of white, African-American and Hispanic respondents, principally because of the racial distribution of those completing our questionnaire. As Table 1 indicates, the final distribution of useable interviews fell short of our goal for Hispanics in both studies, and we interviewed more white than African-American respondents in the JCPT training study. After completing the interviews, we decided to deal with the issue by weighting the data for analysis. Among other decisions, we rejected our initial plan to proceed with an analysis of ethnically balanced samples, and instead weighted respondents so that their profiles matched the “universe” of participants, based on the original self-completion questionnaires returned by participants. Those original distributions are also presented in Table 1.

Weighting

Weighting the data had the biggest impact on the results of the JCPT training study. The demographic profile of the 354 respondents in that study did not closely match the profile of those who attended training sessions during the target period. As Table 2 indicates, our interviewed sample (listed there as “wave 2”) underrepresented black training participants by about 10 percentage points, and overrepresented whites by about the same amount. The percentage of Hispanic respondents closely matched their proportions in the original data (listed as “wave 1” in Table 2). The interviewed training sample was also more affluent and better educated than the group from which they were drawn. Because race often affects where people live in Chicago, those we interviewed also did not represent the geographic distribution of the original sample. This is important because we have found that police districts appear to vary in terms of the local climate of opinion about policing and problem solving, so the over- or underrepresentation of areas where people are generally friendly or hostile toward the police could affect our findings.

As a result, we developed a set of case weights for the interviewed training sample that adjusted them by race and district. The reference group was the full set of white, African-American and Hispanic attendees who completed a meeting questionnaire, not the subset who give us their telephone number. The effect of the race adjustment was the most significant part of the formula. As Table 2 indicates, the resulting distribution of demographic data (shown in the “weighted” column of Table 2) more closely approximates our initial portrait of training participants. The weighted data are used in all of the analytic reports based on this survey. Tests of significance were calculated on unweighted data.

The beat meeting participants that we interviewed much more closely matched the distribution of the original group. These comparisons are presented in Table 3. The analyses presented in our reports are also based on weights that correct the beat meeting data by race and district, but their impact was minimal.

Table 3
Beat Meeting Sample Profiles

VARIABLE		WAVE 1 (%)	unweighted WAVE 2 (%)	weighted WAVE 2 (%)
Age	17-29	8	7	9
	30-49	43	41	41
	50-64	27	29	28
	65+	22	23	22
Education	No high school	15	15	16
	High school/GED	20	18	18
	Technical/vocational	8	6	6
	Some college	28	29	28
	College graduate	29	32	32
Home Owner	Yes	77	76	74
	No	23	24	26
Income	less than \$10,000	12	9	10
	\$10,000-19,999	16	14	13
	\$20,000-39,999	31	37	37
	\$40,000-59,999	25	25	25
	\$60,000+	16	15	15
Race	Black	41	44	41
	Hispanic	16	13	16
	White	43	43	43
Sex	Female	56	55	56
	Male	44	45	44
Years of Residence	less than 5	18	18	19
	5-14	22	23	21
	15-24	17	18	17
	25+	43	41	43
District	3	4	4	3
	4	13	11	13
	6	17	21	17
	8	14	14	14
	9	3	3	3
	12	5	3	5
	13	6	7	6
	14	3	3	4
	15	11	7	12
	16	12	13	12
	18	1	< 1	< 1
	20	4	6	3
	21	3	3	3
	23	1	< 1	< 1
24	4	5	3	
Total Cases		633	291	286

Data Preparation

The completed interviews were carefully edited, and all open-ended questions were systematically coded. A coding system was devised to classify the verbatim list of neighborhood problems that were identified by respondents. They were classified into 79 discrete categories that were in turn grouped into 12 major categories. These categories were coordinated with the analytic categories used to classify problems in other studies that we were conducting. A list of problem codes is included at the end of this section. Responses that interviewers filled in by hand to identify miscellaneous and “other” response categories were also coded, so that the SPSS file defining the data set includes many specific codes that cannot be found on the questionnaire itself. Some response categories were also redefined during the coding phase, and those changes are also documented in the SPSS files.

Respondents who tried to solve the problem(s) they mentioned were also asked to explain in their own words what they had done to try to solve each. For each problem for which a solution was attempted, up to three keyword phrases were coded from their open-ended responses. These keyword phrases contained at least two words, the first a “verb” and the second a “noun.” Examples are “attended court,” “cleaned graffiti,” “patrolled streets,” and “confronted owner.” Where the respondent described a multi-group effort, the letter ‘Z’ was appended to the verb as a prefix to identify group efforts. An example is “zimproved lighting.” Up to three verb-noun keywords were assigned to respondents, depending on the number of problems they identified. In the SPSS files these codes are “long string” alphanumeric variables.

Two variables were created to identify the most unique and interesting respondents. One was based on the open-ended question asking respondents what they had done to solve problems, and 22 percent of the beat meeting sample and 25 percent of the training sample were flagged by this variable. In addition, interviewers were instructed to make note of spontaneous comments by respondents and note them in the margin of the questionnaire. Another variable identifies these marginalia, and 5 percent of the beat meeting sample and 3 percent of the training sample were identified in this way.

List of Neighborhood Problem Codes

Police Services	42 trash, junk, littering
01 not enough police	43 abandoned buildings
02 police harassment	44 noise
03 police disrespect for disabled/minorities	45 dog waste, dogs generally
04 slow police response	Minor Disorders
05 police administration or headquarters	50 graffiti
City Services	51 general vandalism
10 misc. landscaping problems	52 loitering
11 streets/walks in disrepair	53 panhandlers
12 street lights out	54 public drinking
13 traffic lights out	55 truancy, curfew violations, kids misbehaving
14 general service decline	56 fraud, cons, scams, imposters
15 missing stop sign	57 strangers in neighborhood
16 sewer flooding	Serious Disorders
17 garbage not picked up	60 drugs
Businesses	61 crack/drug houses
20 sales to minors/underage drinking	62 prostitution, johns
21 liquor stores, bars and taverns	63 guns, gunfire
22 drug sales outside or nearby	64 organized crime
23 absentee business owners	Gangs
24 misc. problems—traffic, rowdy patrons	70 gangs—general
25 illegal business practices	71 gang recruitment
Cars and Traffic	72 gang drug selling
30 parking problems	73 gang intimidation, loitering
31 delinquent cars	74 gang wars, violence, shootings
32 car repairs in wrong place	75 gang graffiti
33 abandoned cars	Property Crime
34 loud cars—music and muffler	80 burglaries, break-ins
35 speeding cars and other motor vehicle infractions	81 car break-ins, damage
36 traffic congestion, flow	82 theft—general
37 drunk driving	83 auto theft
38 accidents	84 trespassing
Annoyances	85 arson
40 domestic disputes	Violent Crime
41 neighbor problems	90 robberies, muggings
	91 assaults
	92 rapes
	93 home invasion
	94 purse snatching

- 97 violence—general
- 98 shootings, homicide

General Crime

- 99 general crime

Social, Economic, Misc.

- 100 racism, anti-Semitism, hate
- 101 community apathy; no sense of community
- 102 poverty, business flight, unemployment
- 103 poor parenting
- 104 problems with adjacent beat
- 105 general fear, safety concerns
- 106 undesirable neighbors; section 8 and recovery homes
- 107 owner and management problems; slumlords; illegal property conversions
- 108 school-related issues
- 109 not enough social activities
- 110 personal problems